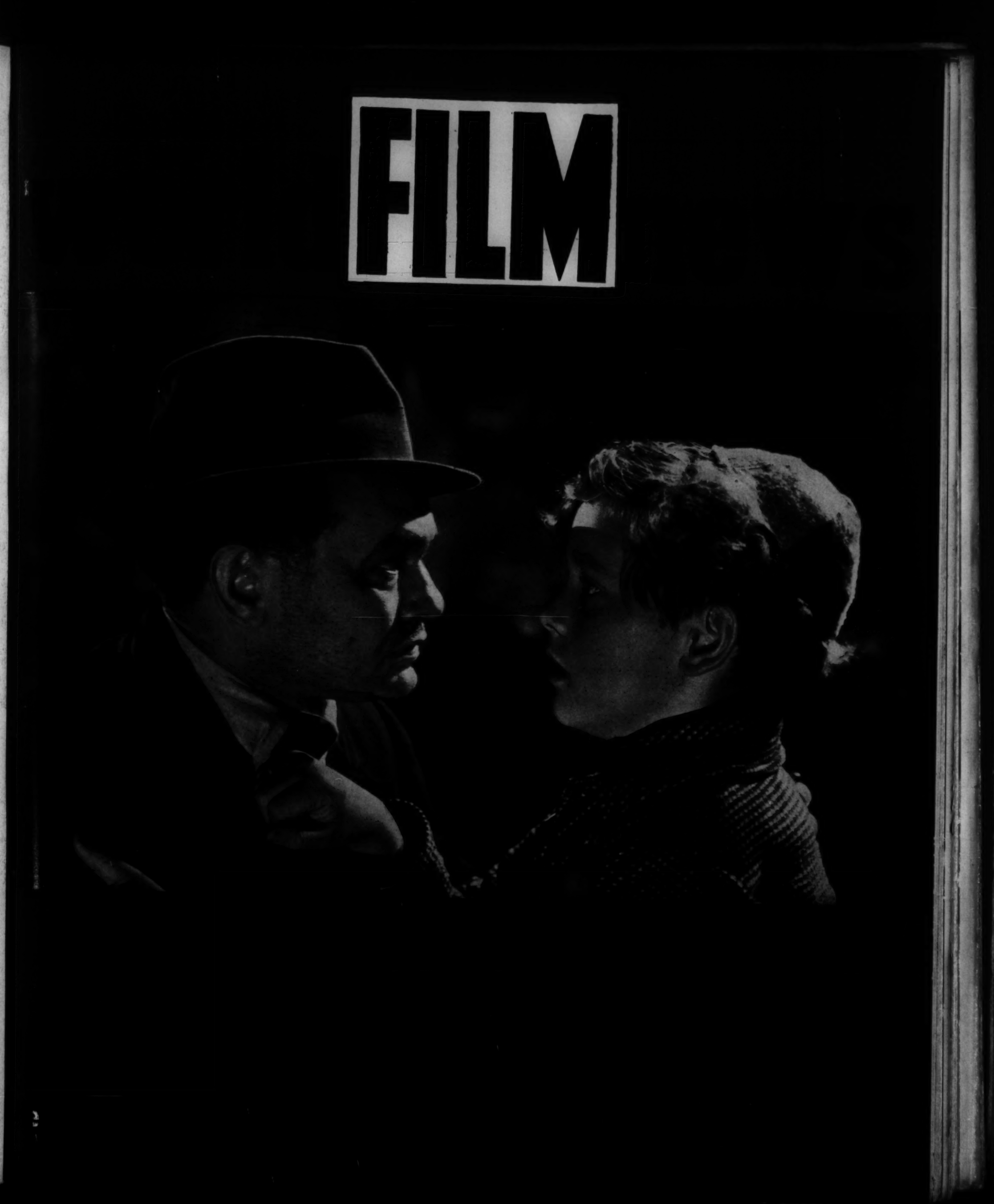
FILM



BEST WISHES FOR 1938

to all those who collaborated in the production of R.F.U. films in 1937

and especially to

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From the Directors and Staff of

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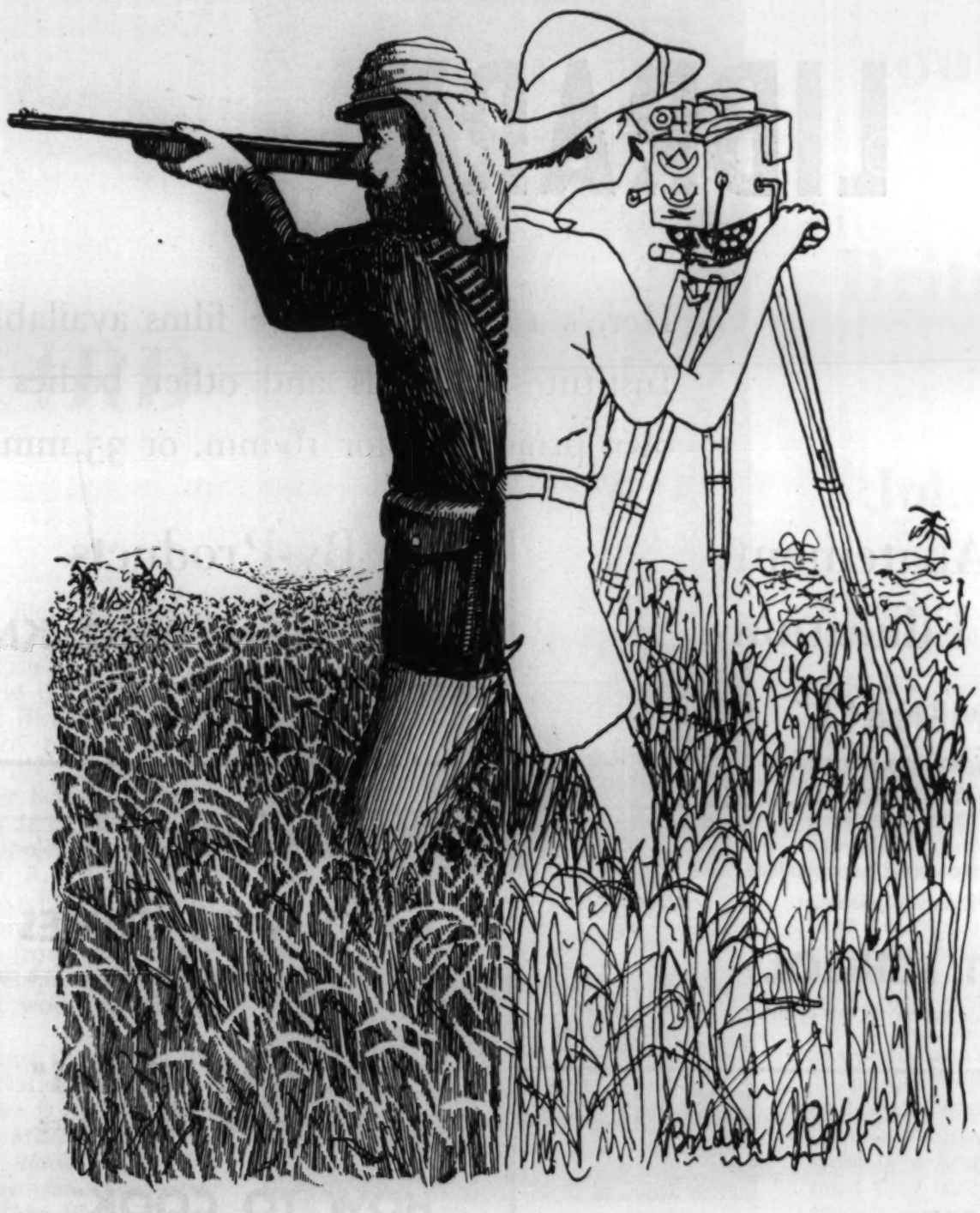

TIMES CHANGE–

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Thirty years ago no one would have understood that the gentleman on the right was "shooting" just as much as the one on the left. Nor would they have believed that a vehicle could travel at 80 m.p.h. Motor cars have changed and the modern engine is the most efficient piece of mechanism the world has yet seen. Shell has kept pace with every step in its development and maintained its reputation for giving the best possible performance.

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On Smoke Abatement, Health and Education

"THE SMOKE MENACE"
About a national problem of startling proportions. **15** *minutes.*

"NUTRITION"
Surveys inadequate food budgets among large numbers of people : suggests ways and means to good diet. **28** *minutes.*

"CHILDREN AT SCHOOL"
A review of the public education system of this country. **24** *minutes.*

On Housing

"KENSAL HOUSE" A review of a housing estate which marks a revolution in housing for this country—with nursery School and tenants' clubs. **15** *minutes.*

"HOUSING PROBLEMS" A vivid description of slum life by those who have to live there. **20** *minutes.*

On Gas Manufacture

"HOW GAS IS MADE" **10** *minutes.*

"THE ROMANCE OF A LUMP OF COAL" **5** *minutes.*

On By-Products

"THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO LITTLE" **5** *minutes.*

On Cooking

"DAISY BELL COMES TO TOWN"
Milk cookery with the Griffiths Brothers as a cow. **10** *minutes.*

"POTS AND PLANS"
The first British film on Kitchen Planning. **10** *minutes.*

"HOW TO COOK"
M. Boulestin gives instructions on basic principles of cooking. **15** *minutes.*

"PARTY DISH"
M. Boulestin again, making something more elaborate. **15** *minutes.*

"DINNER HOUR"
How the big hotels and restaurants manage in the rush hour. **16** *minutes.*

✸

If you wish to make up a programme of these and other films of travel and cartoon, write to Mr. Thomas Baird, Film Officer of the British Commercial Gas Association, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1.

THE WAY FORWARD

"*The Life of Emile Zola*"

What 1938 could mean for British Films

by John Grierson

At this time of year the film critics are all busy at their little game of placing the best films; and it is surprising with what unanimity across the world the first twenty or thirty are selected. But *World Film News*, with that nice variety of method which distinguishes it, has gone beyond the critics and asked experts in other fields to help in the adjudication. There is James Bridie, the dramatist, Sir Hugh Walpole, the novelist, David Low, the cartoonist, A. J. Cummings, the political writer, Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal leader, McKnight Kauffer from art and Herbert Read from the higher criticism. It is a noble company and there must surely be a special word of wisdom among them.

Set their judgment against the official list of firsts issued by the National Board of Review in New York. Here is the American order of merit: (1) *Night Must Fall.* (2) *The Life of Emile Zola.* (3) *Black Legion.* (4) *Camille.* (5) *Make Way for Tomorrow.* (6) *The Good Earth.* (7) *They Won't Forget.* (8) *Captains Courageous.* (9) *A Star is Born.* (10) *Stage Door.* Except for *Zola*, *The Good Earth* and *Captains Courageous*—brave and spacious films all of them—our British experts have very different views. They make their selections from a wider world: from Germany, France, Russia—even from Britain. The American list, in comparison, is self-centred and rather parochial.

For me the special significance of the British choice is that British films are included with affection, and that they are the simpler films like *Edge of the World*, *Farewell Again*, *Storm in a Teacup* and *To-day We Live.* The thunder of those expensive masterworks which, two years ago, were to conquer the world, has died down; and the small voice of the simple things well done is being heard at last. Our British film world has, like the Prodigal Son, been journeying in far countries and wasting its substance in riotous living. There is even a certain sweet accuracy in the ancient description that "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want . . . and no man gave unto him." No man gives unto him to-day.

It has been true all along that the best interest of British films as of any films, must lie in honest and patient work. Brilliance of showmanship may bring its great successes but the basis is good story telling, good acting and good craftsmanship. Unfortunately, we have had the whole business of cinema wrong way about. We have permitted it to think fancifully of fortunes instead of making a simple return on its money. We have allowed it to serve the vanity of a few egotists instead of creating a picture-making community working in co-ordinated teams.

There is nothing on earth to stand in the way of an immediate development of the British cinema. All that is wanted is some honesty, a little humility and an interest in the work for its own sake. I believe that any producer who appreciates the simple and essential values of a good story well told, knows how to keep to the mark of his money, and is strong enough to keep dreams of fortune out of his head, can wade in now and make an honourable contribution to the future. The larger themes and the more spectacular achievements will come not by extravagant and melodramatic assault, but as by-products of a quieter process.

The question in my mind is whether our lead is good enough. Will the men who control the distribution machines appreciate the good sense of a long-term constructive policy, or must they continue to fall for the confident accents of the faker. Will capital, which has been deceived so much, come to its senses about films and film people? Will it give honesty a trial for a change or must it, too, be wooed with idiot's promises? Will the writers and artists realise that the big money is here to-day and gone to-morrow and that simpler salaries may mean longer and more solid returns? There is no great mystery about the future of British films, only the mystery of really wanting it, really working for it, and trusting those who sensibly do both.

And so I am glad to see in the list of films for the year the honourable mention of films like *Edge of the World*, *Farewell Again*, *Elephant Boy*, *Storm in a Teacup*, and *To-Day We Live.* They may not be smash hits but every one of us knows how, in each case, sincerity and good workmanship went to their making. It is just possible that they represent together a turning point in the history of British films. May their tribe increase!

1937—CELEBRITI

Sir Hugh Walpole

Der Ammenkoenig: good thick period stuff with a real sense of humour. *Le Roman d'un Tricheur:* best film of the year. Delightfully intelligent and oblique in its humour. *The Good Earth:* excellent photography. *The Edge of the World:* first-class atmosphere. *Captains Courageous:* sea picture grand, and Freddie and Tracy admirable. *Farewell Again:* although too restless, beautifully directed; script exceptional.

A. J. Cummings

I am afraid I am not in a position to say what I consider to have been the best six films of the year, since I go to the picture-house not more than a dozen times a year.

The only two films from which I have ever received undiluted pleasure were Chaplin's *Modern Times* and Wells's *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*. The news pictures I could look at for hours. The documentaries grow curiouser and curiouser, but on the whole better and better. Walt Disney gives me more mental and emotional satisfaction than any love drama I have ever had to look at on the screen.

With one (female) exception, screen lovers (who appear to be chosen primarily because they photograph well) have not the foggiest idea, poor muts, how to make love; and they are compelled to express ideas which psychologically and in their outward form are not much above the level of the headline sex-clichés of the American tabloid newspaper.

What would I like to see on the screen in the future? I know what I don't want to see.

Cut out about 80 per cent of the American hocus-pocus and 90 per cent of the everlasting leg chorus with its dismal repetitive jazz—almost a physiological reversion to the primitive tom-toms; forget the word "colossal" in terms either of cash or stage setting and spend the money instead on real actors and actresses in preference to Greek torsos and dolly profiles; and on intelligent scenario writers who can produce scripts that deal with life as human beings know it to be; not according to the grotesque inventions of American and Continental producers with a cock-eyed view about box-office receipts. All human values are now so continuously distorted on the screen that they no longer carry even the rapture of surprise.

Producers as a class make horrid mistakes about the mentality of servant girls and city clerks. The producer who first finds out what these mistakes are and gives the public what it doesn't know it wants will make a well-deserved fortune.

These remarks I know are not fit for your "symposium." But "ca ne fait rien."

James Bridie

What with one thing and another I haven't seen a very representative bunch of films during 1937. My vote in this symposium would be unfair and uninteresting.

My complaint against those I *have* seen would be that of the nineteenth century agnostic against the Universe. From time to time I was entertained, moved, excited, shocked and bored; but I could see no evidence of Design in the little universes I had presented to me. There were intimations of immortality and order in the last of the silent films, but they don't seem to have reached the talkies yet.

As the likes and dislikes of an atheist cannot have any significance, perhaps you will excuse me from recording mine. A Happy New Year to you.

Sir Archibald Sinclair

Farewell Again, The Life of Emile Zola, Lost Horizon, The Plainsman, Spanish Earth and *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*.

Herbert Read

Dead End, The Gay Desperado, A Day at the Races, Der Ammenkoenig, Un Carnet de Bal, and *Winterset*.

Dead End seems to me to come nearest to the formal requirements of a great work of art, although I think it is a little restricted in place—one of the unities the film can afford to disregard. *The Gay Desperado* for its enormous gusto. *A Day at the Races* for its surrealistic moments. *Der Ammenkoenig* for being historical but not dull. *Un Carnet de Bal* because this particular cluster of French actors seem to me to be the best in the whole film world. *Winterset* because it is a brave attempt at poetry, only spoilt by being poetic.

Films that I would like to see? They are legion, but here are four:

Pantagruel: a Rabelaisian film, with perhaps Laughton in the title role.

The Art of Living: a documentary, showing the city of the future, but built up, not from models, but from existing houses, schools, roads, etc., in various parts of the world; with scenes of individuals and groups enjoying life in these ideal surroundings. The *possible whole* constructed from the *actual particulars*.

Le Roman Noir: a film of mystery and horror based on the classic examples of this kind of romance—"Melmoth the Wanderer" or "The Mysteries of Udolpho" or "The Monk." But done, not crudely, but with all the apparatus of a modern surrealist interpretation of these stories.

A "straight" fairy-tale film—*Cinderella* or *Rapunzel* or *Jack the Giant-killer*, but done with realism and fantasy instead of the usual farcical humour and sentimentality.

E. McKnight Kauffer

Elephant Boy, Farewell Again, Love is News, Der Ammenkoenig, Le Roman d'un Tricheur, and the Imperial Airways film, made by Rotha.

David Low

To me, the best films of 1937 were:

Ebb Tide: good colour—good Homolka—story spoilt by introduction of lurve-interest. *Zola:* full marks to Muni for character-atmosphere—I think his *Zola* shades his *Pasteur* and definitely beats his Chinaman in *The Good Earth* (but then a European made up as a Chinaman always annoys me, because the different facial angle makes it impossible. Why didn't they get a Chinaman?) *Lost Horizon:* pleasantly sentimental two-hour escape for a disgruntled satirist. *My Man Godfrey:* witty. Carole Lombard is a competent doll. *They Gave Him a Gun:* Gripping (as they say). *Three Smart Girls:* The story was bosh, but Deanna Durbin was surprising. To my mind the discoveries of the year are Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland. I loathe child actresses, and neither of these are particularly attractive physically; but the commanding personality and mature talents of both simply astonish me.

I should add that in Film Cartoons Walt Disney has maintained his average, but his copy-cats have descended a couple of yards lower in the twelve months. For heavens sake, why not a new idea?

What I Want: More historical films with less of the ham romance and more of the March-of-Time spirit. Less of the childish slapstick which British producers seem to think is English humour. Anyone would think we still lived in the Middle Ages when people used to laugh at hunchbacks.

Norman Wilson

A surgeon's knife can cut a large slice out of a year's film-going, and there are some grievous gaps in my record. The plaudits of colleagues still ring in my ears to remind me that two films, *Zola* and *The Good Earth*, remain to add zest to the new year. But even incomplete, it has been a good year's viewing. With its passing go my thanks to Gregory la Cava, Powell and Lombard (not forgetting Mischa Auer and Eugene Pallette) for showing with sparkling conclusiveness in *My Man Godfrey* that the Marx Brothers are more normal than is usually suspected. My loudest huzzas go to Michael Powell who, in this year of debate, pointed a surer and saner way to salvation for British productions than any measure of Government protection. The screams of his gulls in *The Edge of the World* get more than will all the F.B.I. screams for assistance.

To Strand go similar thanks for *To-day We Live*, for its restrained, moving realism, sense of character and feeling for the deeper spiritual tragedy beneath the physical misery of South Wales; even more for voicing uncensorably the true core of the problem which no social service palliatives can affect.

IES' SELECTION

Among the Continentals, *Pépé le Moko* was whisked off to America before I could see it. Of the others, only *Der Herrscher* (by reason of Janning's virtuosity and the bitterish observance of the after-burial family gathering) and *We From Kronstadt* (which recaptured in parts some of the movie fire of the Soviet classics) induced in me something of the admiration aroused by the best of the recent American films.

The year's surprise, for me, was Dorothy Arzner's *Craig's Wife*, a clean-cut brittle little piece with a passionless objectivity on the Tchekov plane.

Basil Wright

Emile Zola. Great in Muni's acting, but even greater because it reminds us of the conscience we should be feeling to-day, but have tended to forget. The film of the year.

The Edge of the World. The first British feature film to take its subject from real-life and keep a sincerity of treatment right through the melodramatics of the story. Easily the best British film so far.

Way out West. Wins from *A Day at the Races* by a short head by its consistent brilliance from beginning to end.

To-day We Live. Documentary at last finds its feet among the ordinary people. Dramatically convincing, and concerned with the most vital problem of the day.

They Won't Forget. Runner-up to Zola as a social document, and as a piece of film craft absolutely impeccable.

Spanish Earth. The most sincere film of the year. Succeeds in beating the propagandists at their own game, and presents the best commentary yet written.

H. Forsyth Hardy

The Edge of the World: because, as a Scot, I am grateful for one of the few real films about Scotland.

The Good Earth: not so much because it is a technical triumph for Hollywood, but because a noble theme has been found for the application of these technical resources; because of two memorable performances, Luise Rainer's and Paul Muni's.

Farewell Again: because a British studio film has at last brought something of the British character to the screen.

A Star is Born: because at last someone has seen colour in its proper perspective, using it to point intimate and dramatic moments and, for the rest, restraining it to a natural and convincing unobtrusiveness.

The Plainsman: because I have always been attracted by the wild vigorous freedom of the Western.

A Day at the Races.

(I have not yet seen *The Life of Emile Zola.*)

Three documentaries, *To-day We Live*, *Plow that Broke the Plains*, and *Techierva Hut.*

And one Disney, *The Old Mill.*

Andrew Buchanan

The Edge of the World: because it denotes the birth of the British Fictional-Documentary film. *Dead End:* because it reveals how to make a *major* box-office proposition out of realism; as Goldwyn might say—"It's raw, but it's cooked; it's tough, but it's tender. What a meal!!" *The Devil is Driving:* because it shows how America handles propaganda in a proper way—transforming it into entertainment that will reach millions. The Devil is also driving on our roads, but the traffic-block in Wardour Street has distracted us from the fact. *Lloyds of London* and *Parnell:* because they remind us of the fine screen material Britain is offering—to producers abroad. *Zola:* because it is a dramatic and thrilling sermon, and as we seem to have forgotten the other one made on the Mount, it does us good. *Spanish Earth:* because it proves that screen journalism begins where newsreels end, and because it teaches us that a *running* commentary is really much more effective if it merely walks.

I should like to see a regular flow of British films, the production costs of which would be regained with profit from the home market alone. Films which could have been made in no other country but Britain.

Herbert Morrison

I would like to see on the screen of all cinemas in the world a great film telling the story of war through the ages and showing—which is the fact—that war either did not settle the problem it was supposed to have settled or that it created more problems for the future than it settled in respect of the past.

And then the film should show the proper way of settling international disputes, namely, by conciliation or judicial procedure, and the happiness of mankind as a result of political, social and economic co-operation rather than conflict.

I would like to see a film showing the preposterous fact of poverty because of plenty and demonstrating how this absurdity might be ended.

Among the documentary films I would like to see more films illustrating the workings of the various departments of local government. Among the best of our municipalities such splendid work is being done for health, education, housing, open spaces and the protective services, yet a large proportion of the ratepayers do not know about it.

I would like to see first-class films—really interesting and even enthralling films—which could be built out of the creative work of the best of our local authorities.

Philip Guedalla

I do not want to see any more Historical Epics in which every possible inaccuracy is presented with a wealth of credits and charming young ladies are instructed to blow out their pretty cheeks in a determined effort to grow old gracefully. I do not want to see any more of these, because I feel anxious for the sanity of our schoolchildren when they compare the facts which they are taught at school with the fiction that is purveyed no less by British studios than by Hollywood.

But the trouble is that I still want to go to the pictures; and when I get there, I want to see fiction and adventure that are remote from the world in which I live. This may seem a little hard on the home producer. But Shakespeare managed it: so why not the cameraman? And I want the whole world to see pictures of the scale and stability of Britain's life, the union of still, traditional backgrounds with scrambling, industrial foregrounds, and the cheerful crowds of Democracy.

Robert Donat

I would like to see more and more films conceived and brought to life entirely within the studio walls. In other words, I would like to see far less of the adaptor and his maiming and murdering, and far more of the creative scenarist who knows how to cater originally for the needs of the film. I believe this sort of work to be potentially rich, and worthy of the brightest writing brains. It is a medium that Shakespeare himself would have welcomed. (Remember, beloved highbrows, middle-brows, low-brows and no-brows, he was merely a hack-workman making clothes to measure.) But writing for the screen is a job that has to be learnt, and learnt thoroughly, in the studio.

More and more, I would like to see films of English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish life, films with the same human and documentary qualities as we find in *The Edge of the World.*

Finally, I would like to have the pleasure of listening to the music of Cockney and Lancashire in a Hollywood boulevard cinema, and hearing it eagerly recognised. I hope the day will come when "Blimey" will be as universally acknowledged as "sez you".

Sir Henry Page-Croft

I would like to see pictures which are in keeping with the spirit and tradition of the British race, stories woven around English villages, Scottish and Welsh scenery, and a whole series of pictures from stories of the Dominions, India and the Colonies, both historic and fiction.

In short, I think you would get a great response if all the things we care for most were presented in place of exaggerated crime or sex stories which have monopolised much too great a proportion of the pictures shown in England.

WHAT, NO DAME?

WHEN Marco Polo travelled, the East was no more to Europe than a strange dream. Men knew that silks, jewels and spices came from there, but no European had ever penetrated into unknown Central Asia until—

What is this, a creeping title or something?

I beg your pardon, sir?

I said you are a long time getting around to the point. Who was this Marco Polo, words of one syllable. I'll give you ten minutes.

Well sir, Marco Polo was a Venetian merchant who went to China, worked for seventeen years at the court of Kublai Khan, and came back again with the story.

What kind of a looking guy was he?

I don't know sir, I've often wondered.

Fine. You'll know when the picture's finished. Right now I can tell you he was a dead-ringer for our best box-office star.

What was he doing in China all that time?

He was in the service of the Grand Khan, going about seeing that all the little Khans paid their contributions, I suppose.

A lousy income tax collector, eh?

Yes, sir.

Well get this. Marco Polo's adventures were a romance. See?

Yes sir, of course they were.

Well, who was the dame?

I beg your pardon, sir?

You heard me. I said who was the dame. The dame, the dame, the dame, the dame, the dame. The babe, the skirt, the frail. Ever hear of them? First thing Marco Polo does in China is, he falls in love.

With whom, sir?

That's what *I'm* asking *you*. You got the dope, ain't you?

Yes sir, but there was no dame.

Oh yes there is. You're going to find her, too, and pretty quick. Has this Kublai any daughters?

Yes sir.

Well, what about them? How about one of them?

¶ Hearing that 'The Travels of Marco Polo' was being filmed, we promptly asked Russell Ferguson to discuss with a famous producer how this film ought to be made. His report is given below verbatim.

¶ Our readers will not of course confuse it with *The Adventures of Marco Polo*, recently completed by United Artists with Gary Cooper. That we expect is much more worthy of its great theme.

No, sir. It seems he married them to the little Khans. It was part of his policy.

Ah, to hell with his policy. Who else is there?

Well sir, there's a princess.

A princess. Why didn't you say so? Now we're beginning to get someplace. Let's hear about her.

She was betrothed to the Khan of Persia. Marco Polo took her to Persia to be married, when he was coming home, after seventeen years.

Maybe we can use some of that. How old is he then?

About thirty-eight, I fancy, sir.

Well, we'll do it another way. Listen, this princess is Kublai's daughter. The minute Marco arrives in China—how long does it take him to get there, anyhow?

About four years, sir.

Well, we can forget the trip.

But sir! The journeys are the only important thing in the story. The marvels of the East, that had never been seen by European eyes—

All right, all right. Don't get all steamed up again. That can all go into the sets and the costumes. Right now it's the story we're working on. Zize saying, the minute he sees this daughter of Kublai——

But sir, she wasn't the daughter of Kublai, was she?

From now on, she is. The moment he sees this dame, they fall for each other. Boy meets girl. That's the first part of the film settled. Now boy loses girl. Who else wants the dame?

I am afraid you've left me behind, sir. I don't understand.

Why is it I have to do everything myself? I'm asking you to think up somebody in the court of Kublai who wants the dame, or at least could of. Somebody fond of dames.

I think I understand, sir.

Thank God for that. A few minutes back, you were arguing that there's no such thing as a dame. You're learning, sonny. Now what have you?

"There was no handsome female who became the object of his sensuality that he did not contrive to possess, taking her as a wife if she was unmarried, or otherwise compelling her . . ."

That's a little dirty, but it sounds like our man. Who is he?

That was Achmac, a Saracen, one of Kublai's governors.

What happened to him?

The people rebelled and cut his head off.

Oke. Well, this Ahmed makes a play for the dame. Marco fights him, puts down the rebellion, kills Ahmed, saves Kublai's daughter, gets the girl, handsome reward, happy ever after.

But, sir, it wasn't Achmac that rebelled, it was the people that rebelled against Achmac. The man who rebelled against Kublai was Kaidu, and that was at another time.

Who cares. Was this Kaidu a good guy? Well, we'll ring him in on the other side. He's Marco's pal. That finishes it. Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. That's *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Same as any other feature.

What about the Travels, sir?

What about them?

If I might venture to point it out, sir, Marco Polo was a traveller.

Do we need to go into all that again?

Well sir, he doesn't seem to have been a lover, or a fighter. His story is all about the people he met, and the places he saw, the mysteries of the East, magicians, cannibals, adulterers, prostitutes——

Say, this is going to be a clean picture. As a traveller he might have been the tops, but he can get in all his licks before the picture starts and after the picture finishes. The story of the picture is going to be Boy Meets Girl. That's the only picture that clicks. It was and it is and it is to come. After this I think we'll make Scott's Expedition to the South Pole. You can start getting the dope on it. Find out who's the dame. Scott and Amundsen are rivals for this dame, and it depends on who gets to the South Pole first. Scott kills Amundsen and wins out. Now get busy on the historical part of it.

World Film News

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

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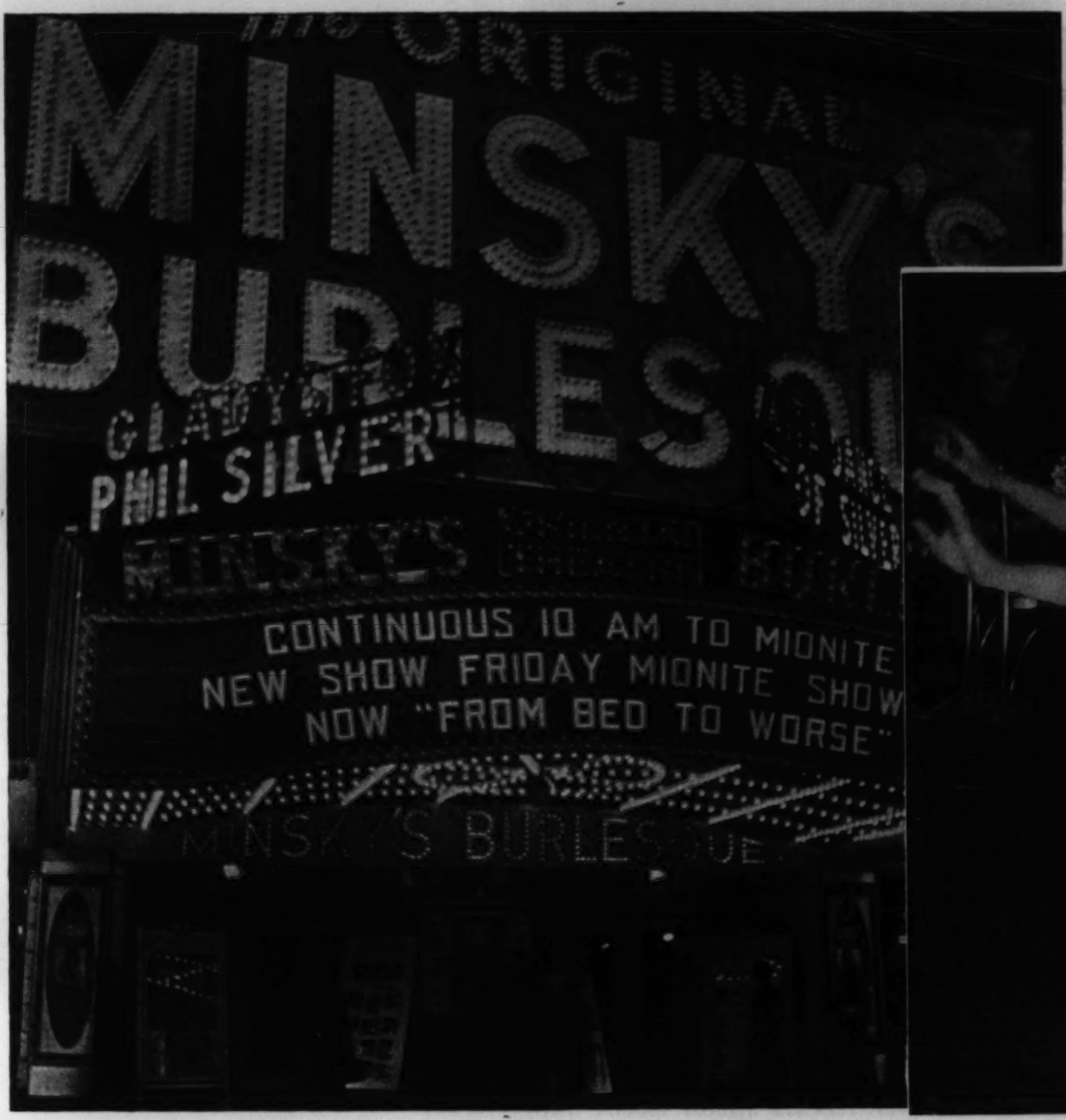
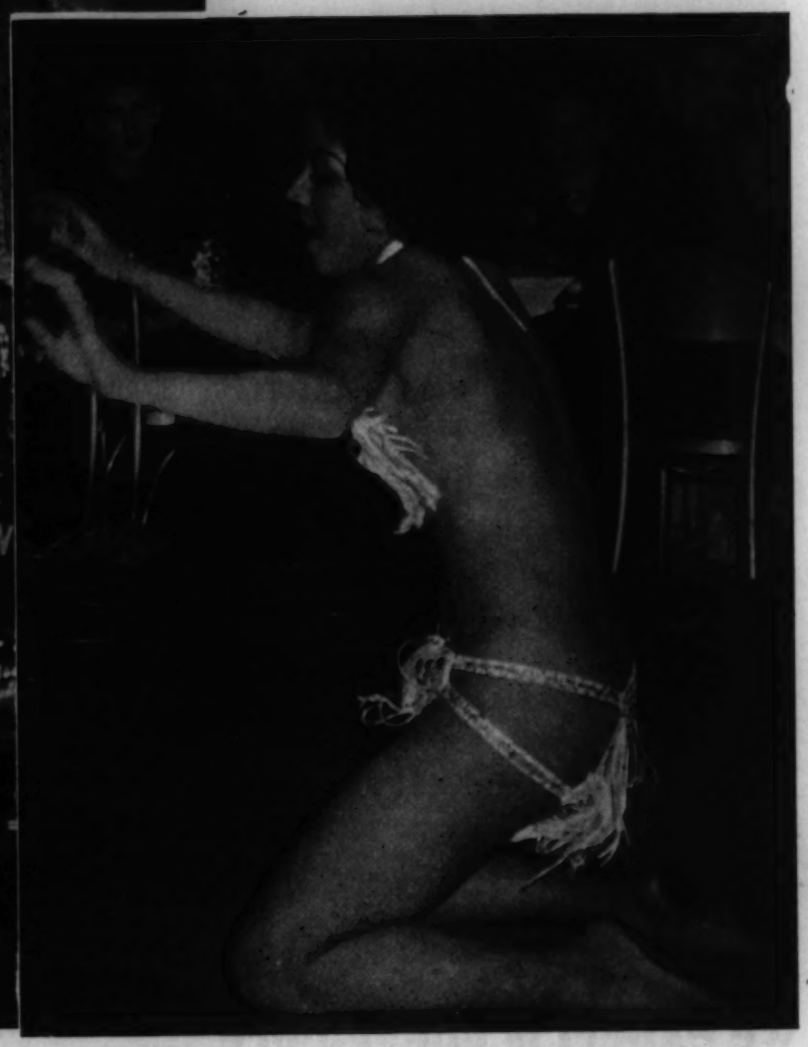




The Minsky Burlesque Theatre on Broadway, and (below) a negro girl's night-club strip-tease act. (Pictures by Dorian Leigh).

STRIP-TEASE ON BROADWAY

by Thomas Baird

BROADWAY is one of the few streets in New York which does not run either North and South or East and West. It takes a diagonal stagger across in a north-west and south-east direction. Wardour Street is said to be the only street in the world which is shady on both sides, but Broadway is crooked in its very geography. It is most interesting and most crooked in the Forties and the Fifties. Here is a crazy jumble of theatres; *Victoria Regina* trading on the Coronation, *Richard II* trading on the abdication, and *Lost Horizon* on sublimation. Cinemas jostle with burlesque halls and luxury hotels. It is civilization's biggest gift to the electrical industry. Millions of lights blaze, neon pipes every building, signs flash and dance and stately buildings try to escape the glare by hiding their heads in the clouds. The subways pour their hundreds on to the already crowded sidewalks. Jew jostles Greek, and Chinee nudges Negro. Yellow and red, black and white bathe in the kindly exciting glare of Broadway and are civilised.

RADIO CITY Music Hall is a little way off Broadway but none would dispute that it is a symbol of the Great White Way. It is a picture house but not so as you would notice it. You might be forgiven if you confused it with a cathedral, an art gallery, a hotel, a crematorium or an aquarium. After long wanderings through rest rooms, picture galleries and rooms full of statuary you find yourself in a large cinema. It is perhaps the best place in the world to see a film and as the audience may not smoke the picture is brilliantly clear. This is fine. But as *you* may not smoke you may feel a little impatient with the sanctity of the temple. This can be torture. The seats, however, are extremely comfortable and they would have to be, for once you are inside you are there for a long time.

Item one is an organ solo. Coloured lights amuse the deaf. The fluted roof which slopes down with Gothic grace is bathed in reds and greens and more subtle indescribable nuances such as heliotrope. Soon the organ sinks through the floor and a beam of light falls on the screen from an incredibly far off projector, and time marches through the stately pleasure palace. Just when you are becoming reconciled to the intrusion of the film into this temple the light mixer with his heliotropes and magentas gets to work again to herald the stage show. A symphony orchestra with a hundred performers rise slowly from the pit and move mysteriously back onto the stage. Their opening item is the first movement of Tchaikowsky's B Flat Minor concerto. The orchestra is in position but I can't see the

piano. I run my eye over the hundred musicians but still can't see it. Then it arrives, or rather, they arrive. A hundred men and a girl is all right enough for Hollywood, but Broadway puts on a hundred men and twelve girls. Rising slowly from the pit comes twelve pianos with twelve pianists dressed in twelve blue satin gowns and twelve blonde wigs. I glimpse at my programme and read (what I had missed before) that the solo is to be played for the first time on any stage by twelve pianists. And they did it. And it sounded very good. Trust Radio City.

Then follow the famous Rockettes. A chorus of twelve or sixteen would be lost on the Music Hall stage, so their chorus has to be outsize. There are forty dancers and they are superb. They dance the *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers* and I think back fondly of Balieff and his half dozen. If he turned in his grave that night it would surely be in bewilderment. The forty slaves lacked the piquancy of the Balieff show; they lacked the humour; it was no longer a joke. This wooden soldier business is now a serious affair; the Guards are a poor second best. It is full dress, slick and complicated. Hore Belisha couldn't ask for more.

Just in case some of us are blind we are given some singing. Not a "Drake goes West" baritone or a "Down in the Forest" soprano, but a whole live glee club who for fifteen minutes sing lustily and extremely well. But that's not all. Lest anyone should still suppose that they are merely in a picture palace we are treated to a ballet. A *corps de ballet* of about fifty take the stage. It is probably sacrilege to say that their dancing made the Russian Ballet look silly, but it did. Then for the mob who had merely come to see the pictures the management were good enough to screen *On the Avenue*.

DURING my few months in and around Broadway the ancient and sometimes honourable institution of burlesque saw its end. I witnessed its last two crises. One was its attempt to resist the invasion of foreign talent and the other its attempt to resist the police. Burlesque goes back to the earliest days of the American stage. It was always a step ahead of vaudeville. When vaudeville was daringly displaying the ankle, burlesque was glimpsing as far as the knee. When legs became the fashion in the chorus, burlesque was already the length of bare backs. When variety began to approach the minimum burlesque reduced what had been conceived as the irreducible—it began to cast the veils.

Till then it had produced some great comedians and was roughly the counterpart of the English music hall. It debunked the highbrow and was the home of honest vulgarity. In its latter days it produced no great comedians. Its stars were the strip-tease dancers, sometimes beautiful young ladies who did very little dancing and a great deal of stripping and presumably teasing. The queen of them all was reputed to be Gypsy Rose Lee, whose technique I am assured was something which Salome might have envied. But she had gone to Hollywood and changed her name before I got as far as Minsky's.

It was shortly after her departure that the Minsky Brothers, the then princes of burlesque, began to get worried about the foreign invasion. High-souled American citizens like the Minskys resented the intrusion into a purely American art of foreigners and they were convinced that the great American public shared their view.

The New York "Herald-Tribune" reported the defence of their contribution to the culture of the modern stage in an interview between the Minsky Brothers and the United States Government House Committee on Immigration as follows:

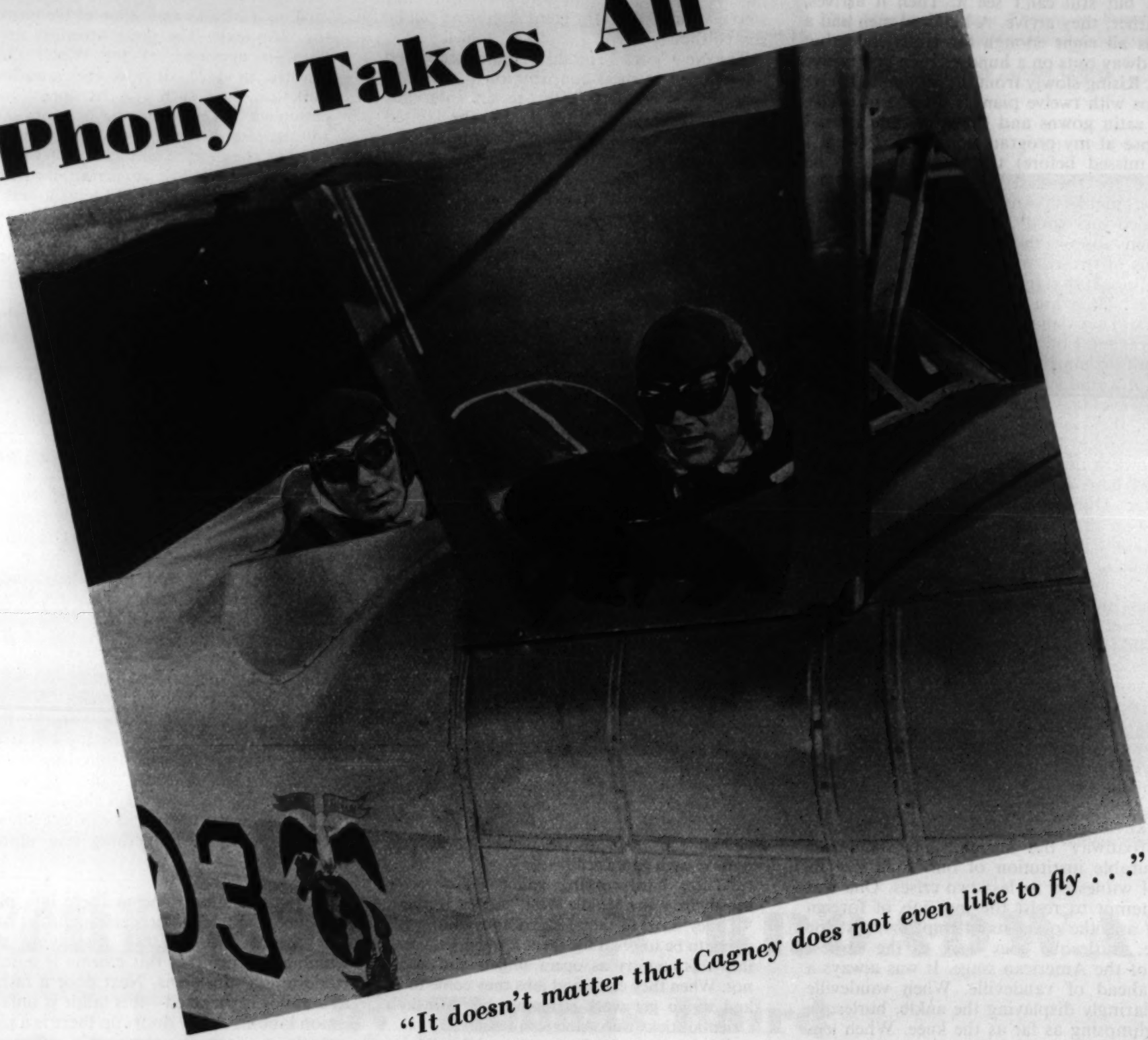
> Sinister foreign competition threatening to debase the "strictly American" art of the strip-tease brought the Minskys down to Washington to-day to ask for legislative protection against the aliens.
>
> Although they disappointed the committee by failing to bring along any demonstrators of the strip-tease the Brothers Minsky were received with all the hushed respect which members of the House of Representatives usually show to eminent men. There were a brace of Minskys, Herbert Kay and Morton; one large, baldish and given to gestures, and the other youthful, natty and selfcontained. As one of their audience put it, their motto was "The Stars and Strips Forever."
>
> "It's an American art, strip teasing," cried Morton Minsky, "and we don't want any foreign competition." "American girls are best," said Herbert, and Representative Samuel Dickstein, Democrat, of New York, sponsor of the foreign artists embargo measure, nodded weightily.
>
> With a proud indignation they told of the French Casino whose girl shows are imported from Paris. Such things, they said, should be put a stop to, leaving the field clear for the Minsky and other true exponents of burlesque.
>
> "Why we here in America have devoted seventeen years to developing the strip-tease art," said Morton Minsky. "Not just any girl can do it right. It means she needs rhythm and poise, and looks and harmony, and must choose the exact psychological moment to remove each garment."
>
> "These hard-working young ladies come mostly from the Middle West," added Herbert. "If they have to face foreign competition it's going to be too bad for them. Foreigners come into this country as opera singers and what-not. When they can't find jobs they come to us and try to get work stripping, but Minsky's Oriental sticks with American teasers."
>
> On the whole, Herbert explained, he did not object so much to the importation of opera stars. Brunhildas rarely make good strippers. But such competition as that offered by the young women at the French Casino seemed to him very dangerous. Competition, he said, was unusually bad in the case of burlesque, since burlesque has given employment to many of the vaudeville artists thrown out of work by the motion pictures. As he put it, "Burlesque is the stronghold of flesh on the American stage." He treated the committee to an explanation of how a strip-teaser is made. "They have to be taught rhythm in a manner synchronous with the music," he said with dignity. "In our school they are taught to strip and unclothe by specialists in the atmosphere and lighting of the stage. Strippers have got to be trained and schooled. It isn't just a matter of going out on the stage and taking off your clothes. It requires finesse. Why, you'd be surprised to learn what thought and effort these young ladies put into their work."
>
> The members of the committee smiled with intelligent comprehension, and listened, fascinated, to a Minsky exposition of the history of the strip-tease. The great American art was born, it appeared, at the Winter Garden Theatre in 1922. It was the salvation of burlesque, and such was its appeal to the customers that there are now between 100 and 150 burlesque theatres in the country, all offering the delicate attractions of the strip-tease. Its greatest living exponent, the Minskys conceded, is Gypsy Rose Lee, who was only prevented from accompanying them to Washington and showing the fortunate committee members how real stripping should be done by a handsome motion picture contract carrying a salary of $2,000 a week . . . "

But despite the Minskys' claims for the art I found it a pretty odious business. In the heydays of 1922 when strip-tease was the salvation of burlesque, it may have been different. But in 1937 it was a decadent affair reminiscent of the lowgrade sideshow in a fairground and having little affinity with the traditions of vaudeville or music hall. If the Restoration had a music hall it must have been like this. In the Spring of 1937 the police or the sanitary or somebody stepped in and closed the burlesque houses. The Minskys raised a plaintive cry against the injustice but soon the *Oriental* and the *Gaiety* and the others were dark at nights. Then the Minskys decided to reform and bring back straight vaudeville. Burlesque disinfected was rechristened 'Vaudecue,' and 'Variety' announced: VAUDECUE NEW TAG FOR SAPOLIOED BURLEY, which, in English, means "Vaudecue new name for whitewashed burlesque". It was neither vaudeville nor burlesque but a half-baked effort to borrow from two corpses. Death warmed up does not fare well on Broadway and in a few days the *Oriental* and the *Gaiety* were dark spots in the flood of Broadway's light. Something had marched on.

OUTSIDE a super cinema there is a picket line. A single file procession circles round and round the entrance displaying cards which announce that this cinema is unfair to trade union musicians. Next door a fashionable tailor is picketed—this tailor is unfair to union labour. A few doors up there is a picket outside a cartoon company's office—this company is unfair to union artists. At the entrance to the 42nd Street subway a solitary figure announces that the news stand is unfair to union labour. A fashionable hotel also has a picket—it is unfair to union waiters. A second-rate bar is picketed too. The placard announces that the pub owner is unfair. The barman comes out, speaks to the picket, and hands him a coin. The picket drops his placard against the wall and hurries off down the street. In five minutes he is back and in his hand is a bottle of milk. He runs inside the bar, delivers his errand, picks up his placard and resumes his march. The proprietor of the bar is unfair.

On the face of it, it seems a feeble knock on the gilded doors of Broadway. But the hotels and the cinemas and the others are taking notice. The reappearing pickets are a glimpse of reality, and in their disorder a glimpse of order. A compass line across North-West to South-East, straight across crooked.

Phony Takes All



"It doesn't matter that Cagney does not even like to fly . . ."

EDMUND WILSON is not only a great critic and a good reporter, but one of the most refreshing human beings alive. I think the reason for his excellence in these three separate fields is that he is a moralist. This means that he has a clear and human idea of what is worthwhile and what is ignoble. I mention this because in a recent book review in *The New Republic* he was, like Queen Victoria, not amused. He quoted some lines from Alva Johnston's little book on Samuel Goldwyn as follows:

"Last year was Sam's twenty-third in the movie business; his press department at that time spotted him two years and celebrated the completion of his quarter century in the business. Next year is Sam's real silver jubilee. It is something for everybody to feel patriotic about. The U.S.A. leads the world by a wider margin in pictures than anything else, and one of the chief reasons is the Great Goldwyn."

Wilson added: "Well, I for one will be damned if I will feel patriotic about Sam Goldwyn's silver jubilee, which his agents have already celebrated two years before it was due."

The enterprising boys in the Goldwyn press department might have pointed out that the Mikado of Japan has a birthday whenever it is necessary for political effect. If I am not mistaken, the recent Coronation was set for such a time as would bring in the heaviest commercial returns. I even seem to recall that the birthday of the present King of England has been transferred to a more propitious season. If they can do these things, why shouldn't Mr. Goldwyn anticipate an anniversary? Perhaps two years ago Mr. Goldwyn needed a celebration. It was about that time that he was just getting through with his million dollar tribute to Miss Anna Sten and incidentally was blaming everybody but himself for this expensive disaster. Perhaps the silver jubilee was needed to buck up himself or his exhibitors. It was a trifling deception. It was hardly worth noting. Yet Mr. Alva Johnston noted it and certainly expressed no indignation over it. Perhaps he felt that in comparison with the supercolossal fakes which are perpetrated in Hollywood that this one was legitimate enough. But Edmund Wilson spotted a phony. It seems to me that he spotted a tendency to the phony which is becoming definitely a pest.

I think that I am not as strict a moralist as Mr. Wilson is. I know that my private catalogue of phonies does not depress me with a sense that America is losing its integrity or that our whole social life is being based on lies. These things may be true, but I will worry about them some other time. What annoys me now is the transparent falsehood of these phonies—the attitude behind them that you can put anything over on the American people, the assurance that no one is going

Gilbert Seldes has been Music Critic, Political Correspondent, Dramatic and Film Critic and Magazine Editor. He is now Director of Television Programmes for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

He writes here, in an article published by courtesy of 'Esquire', about the "phonies in the movies and in the advertisements on the air . . . They assume that we haven't any intelligence whatever and if we keep on tolerating them, they will be right."

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to call you on a silly fake, the damnable insult to your intelligence. I have a sort of resentment against them when I see through them.

For instance, in the 'Personal' column of one of the most respected of New York dailies there appeared an advertisement like this:

> MARY.—Although I am fond of you, I must confess that I enjoy dining with Sally in the air-cooled Swiss Room of the Lapland Restaurant on Route 9-A, where Chip's orchestra plays delightful music, the cuisine is perfect, and the company always good.
>
> —HARRY.

That is a phony. Again it is utterly unimportant. Turn on your radio late in the afternoon (Eastern Standard Time) and you will get a baseball report, given out breathlessly, strike by strike and hit by hit and run by run as if the speaker were witnessing the game itself—only much faster and far more interesting. This is on the edge of being phony because the audience knows that the game was played about an hour ago. Only the use of the present tense is artificial and I must say that the total result is far more interesting than certain broadcasts of the Wimbledon tennis matches which were legitimate and terribly dull.

HOWEVER, the business of faking on the air has to be watched at every point. Last winter a famous reporter announced that he was broadcasting from the scene of a flood by candle light because all the power was shut off. (How he got power for the transmission of his voice was not explained.) And then, as I recall it, he shifted to a rescue worker who broadcast from the rising waters themselves and, I think, at times from under the water by virtue of a diving helmet. Every single item of this was a fake. The broadcast was done in the studio under usual studio conditions and the diver stood right beside the speaker. No one was injured by this broadcast financially; only another phony was laid down on the foundation of falsifying the facts.

SEVERAL years ago Walter Winchell and Ben Bernie started a feud on the air. The boys kidded each other and their feud became popular. The fact that some people thought Winchell and Bernie actually detested one another did not make this act a phony. The boys were playing it straight. After that, synthetic feuds developed and they were phonies of the first water. At this moment, the popular thing in radio is to bring a master of ceremonies and a band leader, or two famous Hollywood stars, together at the microphone and have each razz the other. The results are almost passionately uninteresting, not only because the script writers provide nothing witty, but because the atmosphere of a fake hangs over the entire thing.

It also hangs over recent attempts to brighten up commercial plugs in which comedians beg for the privilege of taking the announcer's part just for once. There seems to be an evil conscience about the commercial announcements on the part of the sponsors, so instead of making them simple and honest, they add a pretentious false frankness and the plugs become intolerable.

Perhaps my ancient fondness for the comic strip makes me resent the advertising strip—which is far from comic—more than I should. The only thing phony about them is the rapture in the last picture when the right soap or the right breakfast food has been bought and has worked its miracle of social regeneration. No one gets as glad as that over anything in this world. The thing is a phony.

I don't know where you would draw the line in the movies. The movies are an illusion and the mechanical means by which they achieve their ends are unimportant.

It doesn't matter a bit to me that James Cagney, who is often seen at the controls of an airplane, does not even like to fly as a passenger. This does not matter to me because the fact that Cagney does like to drive rapidly from his home to his studio is also unimportant even when Cagney is shown doing a desperate drive in a truck or a car.

But when it is perfectly obvious that acrobatic substitutes have been used in the dangerous sequences of a picture, it becomes rather silly for the studios to send out press releases of the dangers run by the stars. The press department simply knows that a great many people will take it in—and one more phony doesn't matter. Who loses by it?

I make the rather terrifying suggestion that those who live by phonies are going to die by them. If you think that I am optimistic about it, let me ask one question: how often in the past ten years have you bought anything at a fire sale? Eight of the past ten years have been particularly good ones for "going-out-of-business" sales.

Some time in 1932 I stocked up with some excellent shirts and underwear when a Fifth Avenue haberdasher liquidated. The same haberdasher has gone out of business three times since, but I am now buying what I need from the firms which not only stay in business but do not attempt to deny it. The fire sale phony is the older one and is utterly discredited. The time may come when the other phonies will go the same way.

USUALLY a good trailer is enough to keep me out of the theatre when the original picture comes along, but I cannot always manage this. And so, once I saw a few feet of an episode in which a gentleman was very obviously drawing bedcovers off a young woman in bed. Nothing like that scene actually appeared in the picture. Probably it was censored out after the trailer was made, but nobody made any protest. In fact, no one protests about anything—so long as money is not involved.

It is an illusion of mine that our money is being taken away from us by these little phonies. Some of the forty cents I paid to see the indelicate movie should have been refunded to me. If fifty thousand young women go to see Loretta Young in a picture because they read in a fan magazine that Miss Young —God forbid—reads Plato fifteen minutes every day while standing on her head, they are being gypped out of part of their money. If all these synthetic personalities of Hollywood are fakes, we are paying for the build-ups at the box office. . . .

Still I don't mind so long as I am not too conscious of the phony. I have been trapped by intellectual faking and by political faking as often as I have been trapped by commercial faking. If I did not exactly believe that we would all have to wear tags like a dog's licence plate under the Social Security Act, it is because I am accustomed to the worst types of political phonies in the last days of a campaign. No one expects either honour or intelligence in the week before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. But the phonies in the movies and in the advertisements on the air are becoming too offensive. They assume that we haven't any intelligence whatever and if we keep on tolerating them, they will be right.

A BAD EARTH for WOMEN

VERY rarely do the movie men dare to give us a heroine that is deficient in sex appeal. They have done so in *Jeanne D'Arc* and *Mütter Krausen* and *Mother*—but these were made in Europe. Hollywood has now done it with O'Lan in *The Good Earth*.

O'Lan, played by Luise Rainer, is not an important person. She is not outstanding in any way, not particularly brave, not even ugly, just any woman. They make her Chinese.

She is plain, drab, untidy. Her clothes are ill-fitting, her head is bowed, her back stooped. She seldom speaks and her face is for the most part, expressionless. She smiles, I think, twice and it is the merest flicker.

Luise Rainer's performance has been hailed by some critics as the finest of her career. I would call it the finest performance of a female part ever screened. It is better than *Mütter Krausen*, for it goes deeper than a character study. O'Lan is not one woman, but in essence, all women. Whether or not she is a Chinese woman is a matter on which I am not competent to judge.

A materialist, with limitless capacity for work and suffering, without protest or hope. A peasant woman who knows that the soil can provide her with food and must therefore be served and possessed.

The story starts her off as a kitchen slave, marries her to a farmer, gives her poverty and riches and finishes her off in a death-bed scene where, for once, the husband recognises her worth and presents her with two pearls he had formerly given his mistress. These pearls she receives with gratitude and joy. They were part of loot she accidentally found and hers in any case. So, O'Lan is rewarded.

Early in the film O'Lan is shown grubbing in the soil for roots with which to make soup for her family in famine. She finds none and makes the soup of earth. Another time she kills the family ox, a job her husband is unable to do. One wonders why she did not bleed the ox and make it last over a period—a practice known to the crofter women of the Scottish Highlands. But this film is of China and real famine. When the ox is finished and there are no more roots the family treks south,

The Good Earth, outstanding January Release Film, has been praised by Campbell Dixon as "one of the loveliest pictures ever seen," and by Frank S. Nugent as "one of the finest things Hollywood has done." Here is an outspoken criticism of the woman character, O'Lan, played by Luise Rainer.

"Luise Rainer has done a disservice to her sex," writes Marion Fraser, reviewing the film from the women's angle. "It rouses the suffragette in me . . . the movies are made by men and it is man's idea of woman that we see on the screen."

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done a disservice to her sex in letting the shame of it be revealed. There is, however, in her performance an extra touch of masochism which rouses the suffragette and makes me ponder what the films have been doing by way of propaganda for my sex.

The movies are made by men and it is the man's idea of woman we see on the screen. We had in the earlier films two kinds of women, the bad and the good; the former always attractive and spirited, the latter generally insipid and weak. The bad ones knew what they wanted and the good ones knew what their men wanted. The treatment of female parts has not changed very much. Male characterisation has become more realistic and the villain has quite often his good points. But the female characters remain largely in the two original categories.

It seems clear from the movies that women are nearly always beautiful and if they are not they are comic. There seems to be no third way out. The screen is apparently no place for the average woman who works or even for the woman of achievements. The women of the screen seldom work at anything more important than buttering the paws of their employers. They are usually stenographers or manicurists or in some such job of subservience to a superior male. The silent films used to end with the marriage of the heroine and most movies still do, so the woman's traditional job of running a household has had little chance of a screening. The only excuse for pursuing the heroine into married life has been the other woman and her wiles. Married life is dull. To screen it, the directors would be forced to introduce children and unless they are Shirley Temples they are nothing but a pain in the neck. You may have noticed that screen children are usually waifs. The full complement of parents, brothers and sisters, ordinary people doing ordinary things, would require too much ingenuity to make interesting. Much easier to start off with characters that are distinguished: beautiful, comic, abysmally stupid, clever, bad or good—especially if they are women characters.

For the most part the movies have been casual, unimaginative and even flippant with female characterisation. They don't treat us very seriously. So, you see, it is something of an event to have a film like *The Good Earth* and a character like O'Lan.

Despite the fact that the majority of moviegoers are women there has been no protest about this sort of treatment. Indeed we want to forget that we are doomed to the boredom of running households and to enduring the irritation of man's conceit. We want to forget our physical inferiority and the second-rate role that life has allotted us.

When we go to the movies we are not therefore entertained by the O'Lans and their sufferings. We like Garbo when she ensnares but hate her when she renounces. We are mildly interested in the spirited women like Hepburn or Jean Arthur. But it is the vamps we really like for they make the men do the suffering for a change. Mutely sitting by our husbands or sweethearts we go a-man-hunting with the Harlows and Wests and with them lust for the kill.

MARION FRASER.

and O'Lan kills her new-born child in order that they may travel. Again, someone tramples on her during a revolution. She survives the agony to find the jewels that restore their fortunes. When they are wealthy her sufferings are not over. She sees her husband bring another woman into the house; her son beaten almost to death and thrown out for making love to the woman; she sees her daughter grow up, an idiot. She is rewarded for all this, however. She is given two pearls.

From the woman's angle if *The Good Earth* proves anything at all it proves that it is a bad earth for the women. I find no fault with the film for this emphasis but Luise Rainer has

TIME, MR. PRIESTLEY, TIME!

Eileen Beldon, William Heilbroun and Wilfred Lawson in "I Have Been Here Before".

MR. PRIESTLEY is one of our best craftsmen. His narrative is normally a live document, and in his less sophisticated days his handling of the supernatural was superb. His novels seldom stop their action to philosophise, and he keeps a moving series of particular instances which yield a universal of English working class decency and downrightness. But not the tiresome down-rightness which disallows wonder and fear, for into Bradford could come the Devil to galvanise a Christmas pantomime, and on to Flanders could stagger an awkward squad led by Pistol and Falstaff. While pursuing a line of apparent realism there was always a ghost round the Priestley corners. Even when Jess Oakroyd was almost becoming a humbug debunking the humbugs there was a quite reasonable love of the fantastic in the offing.

Now Priestley has slipped over the edge and is making his drama more out of the stuff of fantasy. It is no longer a sly condition of the story and in *People at Sea* it is the story.

Dr. Johnson once disproved to his own satisfaction Berkley's speculations by kicking his rough shoe against a stone. Ten years ago Mr. Priestley would have kicked a stone and said "Behave tha sen!" To-day there is no stone by his fireside and he wears a slipper ill-suited to stone-kicking. Priestley, who a year or two ago gave us a dramatic picture of real people facing current catastrophe in real places in *English Journey*, now busies himself with faery people who talk glibly of eternity while drifting on nameless seas. We hope that he will again kick a buskin against the stones of the roads of England and bring reality on to the stage again, before the whimsy of Jimsy falls on his robust and unfaery shoulders.

Still it would be wrong to accuse Mr. Priestley of philosophical drama. He is still a story-teller, and those critics who have talked about him turning philosopher either do not know their Priestley or their philosophy. He is not writing about Time; he is writing with Time. It is so obvious that he (along with many of us) has become interested in the experiments of Mr. Dunne. He has told us that this is so. He probably understands Mr. Dunne as well and no better than most of us. What he has done is to realise that these experiments are an indication of the direction of contemporary thought. The science which

A provocative survey of J. B. Priestley's three plays, **Time and the Conways, I Have Been Here Before** and **People at Sea.**

Discussing Mr. Priestley's use of the Dunne Time Theory in drama; its effect upon his work and characterisation; "Ten years ago Mr. Priestley would have kicked a stone and said 'Behave tha sen.'"

has bred a generation is fraying at the edges and becoming philosophy—not merely a scientific metaphysics, for through psychology the scientist is being forced into discussing theory of knowledge. How and why do we know? The speculation is in the air. It is in the heart of Eddington's work and it is on the fringe of Jeans'. It is the whole of Dunne and to-morrow it may be in the *Daily Express.* In this Priestley sees drama—and in *Time and the Conways* he tries to see a slice of life as Mr. Dunne, in one of his more perfect experiments, might have seen the Conways. There is divinity in all vision and Mr. Priestley tries to give us a completely divine vision of the Conways. It is the old tragic irony of the Greeks, but it is presented with the philosophical accuracy of our own age.

This does not make Mr. Priestley a philosopher. It does prove him once again to be an expert observer and a skilled reporter. He has forsaken the accepted forms of recording—once he wrote like Hazlitt, then almost like Defoe—and now he records in a framework of his own devising. To say that Mr. Priestley is writing about Time is as ridiculous as to say that *Macbeth* is about ghosts or that *Ghosts* is about hereditary disease. Shakespeare used contemporary supernatural conventions to frame character and action, Ibsen took contemporary social problems to set off play of character, and Priestley takes contemporary theory of knowledge to intensify development and interplay of character.

In *Time and the Conways* this is done brilliantly. The exploitation of the time relations—the playing of the Third Act second and the Second Act third—produces irony and at times terror. The characters become supercharged in their new references. Tchekov once said that drama should be not life as it is, nor life as it might be, but life as it could be conceived in our wildest dreams. Here Mr. Priestley comes near giving us a fearful timeless dream worthy of Tchekov. The theme and characters parallel closely the theme and characters of *The Three Sisters.* There is a similar struggle to freedom and truth. There is the wisdom of simplicity, the terror of half-knowledge and the hideousness of complacency. But somehow or other Tchekov got through to universals. His characters were struggling with powers out of their control. They rose against, or lay down to, Fate, Tradition and Custom. Olga's universe was one of fearful forces predestined to victory. Her nobility was in her hopeless rebellion. Kay's cosmos is just an ill-fitting corset which pinches and chafes and produces discomfort. All Priestley's characters, with the delightful exception of Hazel, while ostensibly struggling with a changing world are merely squabbling with each other or with their own bad tempers. All they are worried about is their own personal discomfort. Given her own way, Olga would have gone to Moscow and started a Revolution; given here her own sweet way, Kay would have gone to London and written for *Time and Tide* instead of the *Daily Express.* Had Fate been more kind there would probably have been more charades and more Conways, and with all the freedom in the world, Priestley's characters would have moved to equally pathetic and ignoble ends with little benefit to either Time or the Conways. Even so, *Time and the Conways* is one of the best current plays. While crying for the moon we should be thankful for a starry night.

I Have Been Here Before is almost as successful, chiefly because it is better acted and better produced. I have never seen Mr. Lewis Casson make a mistake. For his acting and production alone the play is worth seeing. Again the reference and source of action comes from the Time theory, but again it is what happens to the people that matters, and there proves to be excellent material for a first-class band of actors. It is a pretty complicated position these characters find themselves in, and they rightly demand an explanation from the Professor. Once or twice his talking hangs up the action, but skilfully Mr. Priestley makes capital out of this by introducing a note of suspense. Each little bit of philosophy introduces a further possibility in the dramatic action and the interest was sustained.

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Priestley should have taken such a nose-dive in *People at Sea.* After *Time and the Conways* and *I Have Been Here Before* his audience was keyed to a fairly high pitch. *People at Sea* was a slow let-down. Reminiscent at its best of better things it is interesting only for one or two coldly isolated pieces of acting. It is unbelievable that Mr. Priestley was just careless. I prefer to think that he was trying to do something extremely difficult and just failed miserably. I believe that after dealing with the dramatic values of super-reality in the other plays he was trying to find similar values in the idea of all being unreal. The veils of Maya are flimsy and they slipped through his fingers in tatters. It is the only explanation that I can find for so disjointed a piece of work. I find myself forced to believe that the lack of unity and the unrelatedness of the characters is done on purpose, and in the hope that the lack of connection, the fortuitous coming and going, of characters who scarcely affect one another will give a feeling of unreality. In point of fact it only produces a baffling dissatisfaction in the audience, and the feeling that the author has written this in an off mood. It was a wise move to change the title so that it has no apparent connection with the other two plays. We hope it will soon be forgotten by Mr. Priestley as well as his faithful audiences. But if the theme still haunts him, perhaps he will kick it down among the real people of the Potteries or the mills of Lancashire, and see what it does to them. It will either die at their hands or bring them to life. If the latter, Mr. Priestley will be more at home guiding them to their destiny.

Thomas Baird

Way Out West • Comedy

IN the dark backward and abysm of time, before Warners found themselves in the red and staked all on a mammy-singer, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy led separate lives in the grand but chaotic wilderness of the comedy shorts. As a hoary old cinemagoer I remember them—or like to think I do—Laurel as a two-reel star in his own right, and Hardy as an angry foil to Buster Keaton. Then some dear Goddess—or perhaps just Hal Roach—brought them together in that great series of silent two-reelers just before the talkies—the era of the destructive selling of Christmas trees, the voyages perilous on ornamental lakes, and the explosive collisions of the traffic blocks. Sound, which killed Keaton and nearly put the works on Lloyd, swung them to stardom, for they and their directors exploited not merely vocal pleasures but also the infinite possibilities of the Peculiar Noise attached to Ordinary Gesture. The idiom was complete and set; their shorts were manna—*Aerial Antics*, *Laughing Gravy*, *The Music Box* (which I saw seven times and still feel no shame), and many others; and they have now, after several false starts, conquered the feature field.

"Way Out West," a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film, produced by Hal Roach, directed by James W. Horne, and photographed by Art Lloyd and Walter Lundin. With Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, James Finlayson and Sharon Lynne.

Release of the Month

On this one had had one's fears, and the partial excellencies of *Fra Diavolo*, *Convention City*, *Bonnie Scotland* and the rest did not allay them. But *Way Out West* is a triumph. In the earlier films counterplots and tenors interfered with the purer aspects of comedy, but here, save for the few opening minutes establishing the toughery of Brushwood Gulch, nothing impedes their steady progress from disaster to disaster.

There is no need to re-analyse their particular characters, which every decent moviegoer knows as well as those of his own family, but one may well note that they are the last of the great gagsters. Everything in *Way Out West* is built up on simple but beautiful gags, most of them probably by Laurel, who is the producer, and is now reported to be supervising Wild Westerns as well (what vistas of future joy!). Gags of incident, gags of dialogue, gags of sound; gags of Keystone vintage and gags brand new from the inexhaustible bowler; the flaming finger, the ritual eating of Hardy's hat, the vast dent in mother earth where Hardy fell from the roof, the vamp tickling Laurel into hysteria, the mule sneering from the bed-room window, the poignant cry of "Oh, me apple," as the golden chain tightens round Hardy's neck, Laurel's apocalyptic changes of voice as he sings the poignant ballad of the Lonesome Pine—all these, and many more, are the life blood of the picture. There is even a continuity gag; for Hardy, divested of all but decent covering in the search for the locket, departs into an inner room and gets dressed in the twinkling of an eye. Film technique, children, can do these things—ask Aunt Eisenstein—but Laurel, unguarded innocent, enquires "How did you get dressed so quickly?" "Never you mind," replies Hardy, sublimely summing up the history of the Avant Garde movement in three pregnant words.

They are indeed, in spite of the meteoric Marxes, the true iconoclasts of the movies, for their technique is exactly that of the highbrows, the pioneers, and the experimentalists. Whether they learn from a viewing of the more specialised films or not, they certainly use the same methods, and only the ineffable Donald Duck can surpass them in the surprises which arise when the more remote possibilities of movie are exploited as simple and everyday incidents. They are, in a way, pretty near to that halcyon period when the question mark formed by Krazy Kat's tail turned into food, a parachute, or a rifle, at will.

LAUREL and Hardy are unique in that the warmth of a surrounding crowd is not necessary for the appreciation of their humour. In the cold solitude of a private theatre one laughs as much, or even more; and one picks up many gems which are lost in the Empire's gale of cachinnation. The intimate crunching noises, for instance, as Laurel chews a portion of Hardy's hat, Hardy's murmured apologies to the ladies as his clothes are gradually removed, and even the finer overtones of Laurel's hysterical laughter, can only be appreciated in complete solitude.

At this point one becomes conscious that one should be writing a criticism rather than a panegyric: but unfortunately in this case they are the same thing. I have no grouch against *Way Out West*, not even as regards the more fantastic "Alice in Wonderland" effects, about which some prosaic souls complain. The appalling elongation of Hardy's neck and Laurel's toe, and the fact that Hardy's head is twisted three times round on his shoulders and then springs back to normal amongst all the music of the spheres, this I take as a part of their routine of perils which raises their martyrdom to philosophical heights.

Nor can anyone complain about the supporting cast, when James Finlayson of the volatile eyes and voluminous night-gown is there to gnash his teeth and wield his alarming blunderbuss, and when a true successor to the lamented Thelma Todd appears in the shape of Sharon Lynne, whose tough femininity is embedded in all the spice and unguents of Arabia. What loyal friends one finds, too, on the credit titles. James W. Horne must now be rated among the big comedy directors, and one notes with joy that Parrott, who directed many of the Laurel and Hardy shorts, brought his brilliance of timing to the writing of the story.

If there is any criticism to make, it can only be couched in a gnawing fear that—like Chaplin and the *Gold Rush*—the great twin brethren can never equal the success of *Way Out West*. It is a film I would choose to see on my deathbed.

Basil Wright.

A Guide to the best films released in January appears on page 23. **The Good Earth,** *the month's most important film, is specially reviewed by Marion Fraser on pages* 12 *and* 13.

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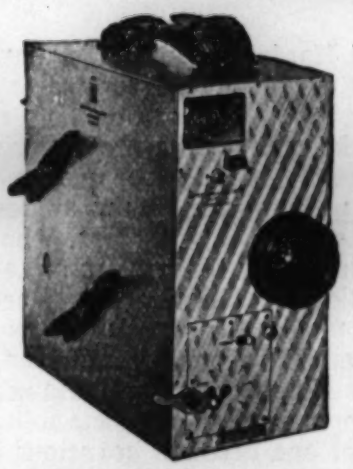

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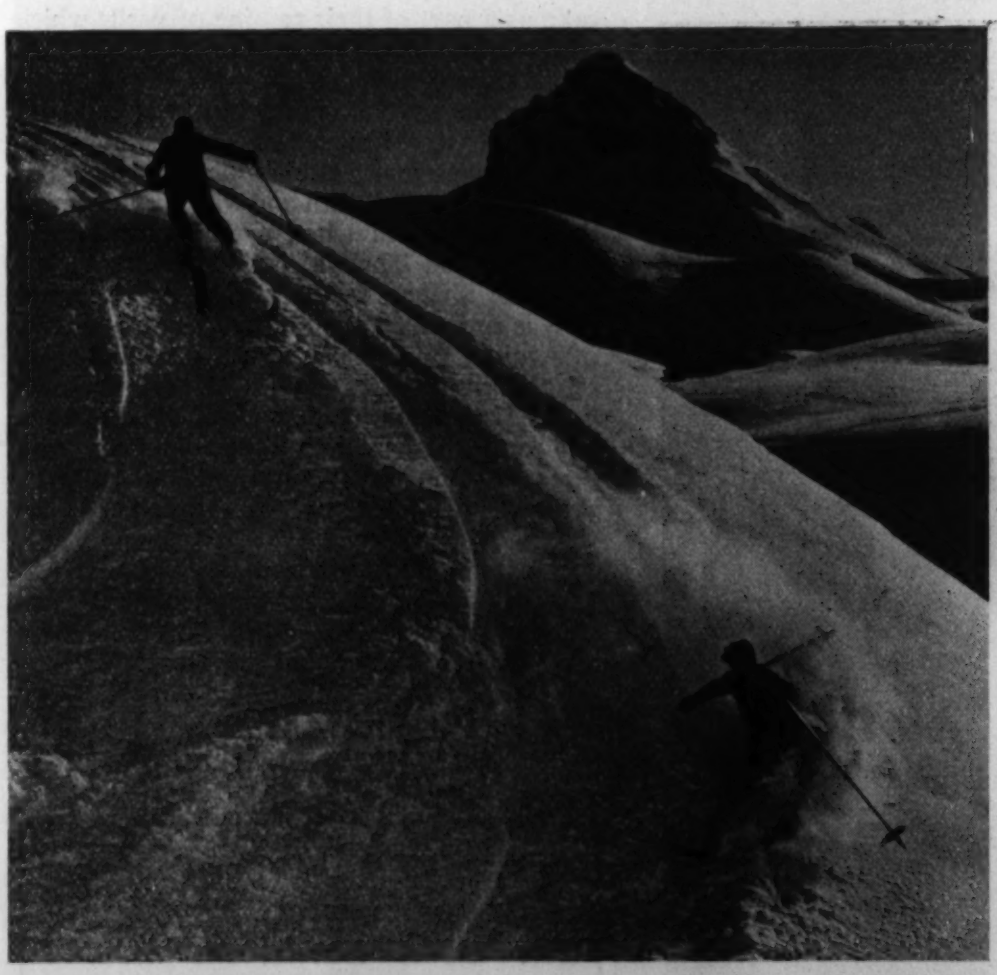

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An early Madeleine Carroll film of the period.

THE SCENE CHANGES

Arthur Elton describes his early experiences in the Film Industry

OUR so-called civilisation has reached its present peak in about nine hundred years since the Norman Conquest. England has struggled through the quagmires of Mediævalism, through the Reformation, through the Cromwellian Revolution, through the bland eighteenth century, through the agonies of the Industrial Revolution, to its present eccentric heights.

Mirroring this civilisation of nine hundred years, the Film Industry has been through the same agonies in thirty-five years. When veterans of the industry look back to the Hepworth days with affection, it is as if historians had personal recollections of hunting with William Rufus. Historians tell us that through all the upheavals of the last nine hundred years essential human nature has not changed. I do not believe it, but they say so, and historians are always right.

I joined the Film Industry in 1927. By historical comparison, I was a sort of drummer boy with Napoleon. I started in the scenario department of Gainsborough Pictures and shared a room, three storeys up, without any windows, with Angus Macphail and Robert Stevenson. The studio was a retired power station, and had not been very much rebuilt. Our room, once the haunt of electricians, had been Carlyle Blackwell's dressing-room. Blackwell was a man of taste, and he had had it done up like the inside of a Jacobean farmhouse. The work, of course, was carried out by the studio carpenters. It had the lasting qualities of a set: the beams crumbled. A kettle hung on a hook in a sham fireplace, while one burnt one's trousers on portable electric fires. There was no window except a sky-light which opened a few inches. One either had a vertical draught, or dozed in a coma induced by tobacco smoke.

It was my job to read and make notes on possible story vehicles. Amongst other things, I read the novels of Ruby M. Ayres. However, Hugh Percival, who in those days lived in a little glass box downstairs, persuaded the management that the future of the British Film Industry lay in producing the novels of Zola, so I had a happy three months reading them all.

To-day, Hugh Percival is a prosperous figure in the Industry. Nine years ago he was, as far as I remember, assistant casting director, living with, rather than under, a spotlight. He seemed to do everyone's job with good grace, and had aspirations to publish an Encyclopædia on the Negro problem. I hope that in his present production activities he sometimes looks back to those days, for he had a real understanding of the aims of documentary films. But perhaps his successful fictional enterprises have extinguished the flame.

Production was very exciting. One day there was a circus scene, with an elephant. The elephant would go nowhere unless led by a Shetland pony, so both were engaged. They arrived at the studio and immediately fell through the floor. Everyone had a grand half-holiday, and no one was hurt.

Then there was an epidemic of stealing. Money disappeared from trouser pockets in the extras' dressing-room. Two detectives were engaged. At the end of the first evening they both had black eyes. No one knew why.

Hayes Hunter was a director. Everyone liked to listen to him, since when he wanted the action to start, he always said "Camera" at the top of his voice, distinguishing himself from other directors by making the word rhyme with "Carnera".

Later on, I was sent to Germany to try and infuse an English tone into German films for English release. My second assignment was, of all films for a German studio to make, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The studio was a converted Zeppelin shed. Sinister Fritz Rasp played the villain. Each Friday was very exciting, because one knew that the manager of the German firm had been scouring round Berlin during the morning to raise the wind for the salaries.

Carlyle Blackwell was Sherlock Holmes. He was very nice, but only addressed me once, when he asked me why it was that I always looked as though I slept in my clothes. The studio was shattered by wild personal quarrels which led several times to fights. Charming director Oswald, now fired by the Nazis, used regularly to throw his scenario on the ground and jump on it, his patience absolutely exhausted. The Germans had mysteriously rewritten the story, so that there was a good deal of by-play with bows and arrows. Why, I cannot remember. As for the Hound, this was a calf dressed up. Why, no one could explain. At the big banqueting scene—another interpolation into the story—a hundred extras arrived. Someone had forgotten to order the table silver, and the scene could not be taken. Instead of waiting for the table silver, they altered the script and sent the extras away. Such were the days of 1927.

To-day, our glorious industry is a model of efficiency. When I was shooting a few months ago, the Dolly was lost (a Dolly is a cross between a mowing machine and a perambulator, and is used to support the camera). Finally it was discovered built in between set and wall. Before we could start shooting, the set had to be taken down. Perhaps the historians are right. The scene changes but time stands still.

The Gutter, Gan

FOUR FILMS

by

John Grierson

Dead End

A United Artists' film, directed by William Wyler, with Sylvia Sidney, Joel McCrea, Humphrey Bogart, Wendy Barrie and Claire Trevor.

The Last Gangster

An M.G.M. film, directed by Edward Ludwig, with Edward G. Robinson, James Stewart, Rose Stradner, Lionel Stander and Douglas Scott.

DEAD END was a serious and successful play on Broadway. It is equally serious and successful as a film. It is beautifully directed by William Wyler, who is not only one of the great directors, but one of the rare two or three whose sense of drama is as adult as his skill. It is profuse in human sympathy as it dives down into the tenements of East Side New York and discovers the teeming tragedy of the poor. What more can we ask? We have challenged the cinema to grow up and take stock of society, and here it does both. We have cursed its dream life and sugar-stick endings. Here is real life and—as one gangster generation dies of its own evil and a new generation is marched off to the reformatory—here is the spondaic ending of honest observation.

Yet, and in spite of watching the film with eagerness and respect, I dislike it intensely and it won't do at all. It is aquarium stuff. It looks at people distantly, like fish, and its sympathy is cold with distance. The poor, poor beggars, are poor; they are uncomfortable; they breed thieves and gangsters and a curse on the conditions that breed them; they struggle against overwhelming odds and what break are they given in achieving the good life? That is the theme and the thesis. It sounds all right; but who was it said that there was more reality in a louse on a dirty bagman than in all this sorrow for the working class? Granted the poverty, the discomfort, the struggle against odds, no slice of humanity is so dim and sad as *Dead End* observes. They laugh and fight and love one another and, except to the sympathisers from without, their dreams of escape are not more important than the rich grip on life they already signify. It is this that *Dead End* misses. It lacks gusto.

Perhaps I am no shakes as a reformer, but I feel a trifle bewildered when I see anæmia made the price of reform. In *Dead End* the heroine, poor dear, wants a cottage in the country away from "all this" and the architect hero, poor dear, feels so savage he could pull down "all this" with his bare hands. Well, I say, let the L.C.C. boys and all such look to that; and they will. But who, except the dramatist and the poet, will see to it that the deeper virtues are not lost in the process? Here, emphatically, there is no contact with these deeper virtues. The poor fish swim round and round with sad eyes and no escape: as though escape were outside, along Riverside Avenue and into the Bronx, and not inside, laughing and loving one another and kicking up hell at injustice and being themselves.

I urge the point because there is one thing the cinema preciously possesses. It began in the gutter and still trails the clouds of glory with which its vulgar origin invested it. But as we ask it to go deep, be sure we are not just asking it to go middle class. And be sure that the next phase of the cinema may not be to eliminate the Cagneys in favour of the Colmans, and indeed to Colmanise Cagney himself. Behind all the arguments about the future of British films there has been an alignment which reflects this fear, and it is far more important for the future than all the divisions over national *v.* international, small films *v.* large. Some of us say the future is where the vitality is, and never mind the art of cinema for the present. We turn from the Korda stuff and the *Victoria the Great* stuff and throw a critical rope to the Will Hays and the Formbys and even if the censor were good, we wouldn't like him on principle. But, see behind that policy the larger question. It would be a pity if we achieved everything and lost our sense of smell.

THE *Last Gangster*, I heard, was just another gangster film and my informant was Sydney Carroll. "Personally I have no use for it", he writes. "It seems to me to pander to a morbid interest in murderers and city thugs and the scenes in which the gangster and his son are put through a sort of third degree are too horrifying for description". Fortunately, I had another and different tipster in O'Brien, scenario chief at M.G.M., and the world's greatest expert on short stories. I was interested to see what he, in high contrast, thought the best M.G.M. film for ages.

Well, this business of being "too horrifying for description" you will have to cut out as no argument at all. So for that matter is the description of the dead in Salammbo and, for a "morbid interest in murderers", your recollection may refer you to Hamlet. The test is surely whether pity goes with the terror and the high resolution of tragedy comes out of the mixture. Gangster film or no, you had better have a close look at this Edward G. Robinson picture for, if my eyes do not deceive me, it is pretty close to the real thing. I shall always count the ennoblement of the maniac in *M* as one of the weirdest and bravest things the cinema has done and the ennoblement of this selfish, arrogant killer in *The Last Gangster* is not different in kind. The basic elements of true tragedy are there. Without letting up on the selfishness, arrogance and evil, here also is courage to make up the human balance. When the film has swung fiercely through the terrors of the gaol of Alcatrez and has tortured the gangster step by step and brought him finally, ashen grey, to his knees, there has been enough of human dignity in the process to make the balance swing not unbeautifully in the sunlight.

I could wish perhaps that Krauss or Lorre or Muni or Laughton had played the part, for Robinson, first rate actor as he is, does not quite make the level of the idea. The film makes a hero of his figure of evil and a not unworthy child of Paradise Lost, but he lacks the subtlety to hold the two elements together. I wish too that the sub-plot in which the gangster's innocent wife flies to the arms of James Stuart and brings up the gangster's son in respectability, were less smarmy. Poor son of a gangster if James Stuart be the alternative and poor Hollywood if this be really the last of the gangsters. It had better dig up a new slice of evil for, heaven knows, it is no good at good.

gster and Garbo

REVIEWED

by

Basil Wright

100 Men and a Girl

A Universal picture, directed by Henry Koster, with Deanna Durbin, Leopold Stokowski, Adolphe Menjou, Alice Brady, Eugene Pallette and Mischa Auer.

Marie Walewska

An M.G.M. film, directed by Clarence Brown, with Greta Garbo, Charles Boyer, Reginald Owen, Dame May Whitty and Alan Marshall.

UNSUSPECTING musicians not fully versed in Hollywood's appreciation of music should be warned before seeing 100 *Men and a Girl* that when Deanna Durbin announces she is going to sing *Traviata* she only means a short aria from that opera, and that when Stokowski tells his orchestra to play *Lohengrin* he means the prelude to Act III. All this the general public knows already, so there is no need to belabour this point; and indeed Durbin makes up for it by a highly elaborate description of a Mozart work, inserted as a gag to bewilder a charming taxi-driver who sings bass. Much of the film is based on this instructive snobbery—the snobbery of people who "know what they like"—i.e., the stock bandstand classics, and want to give each other a fictitious sense of uplift. But, note you, the producers are never quite certain. Having purchased Stokowski and his band, and having chosen suitable warhorses, they still feel it necessary to cover up the chariot wheels with comedy gags. In other words, they haven't really had the sense to exploit the real box-office qualities of a great conductor. They do a slight orchestral analysis, similar to the effort by Legg and Walter Leigh on the B.B.C. Orchestra some years ago; but they miss the golden opportunities of showing a real rehearsal, which is not the triumphant playing of a set-piece, but an erratic and interrupted progress from good ensemble playing to better; and what fun that could have been.

But Stokowski (who, by the way, might have ceded the acting honours to a competent stand-in) is by no means the film. There is Adolphe Menjou, as a down-and-out trombonist, and Deanna Durbin as his lively daughter, together with a host of excellent small part players, and the tropical luxuriance of Eugene Pallette. There is also Mischa Auer, poison to some, and in any case with too little to do in this production. The film has plenty of pace, a number of amusing situations, and great gobs of sobstuff at which Durbin is becoming very good, but which Adolphe Menjou, in spite of his careful exploitation of bags beneath the eyes, only eructates with difficulty. The ghost of his performance in *The Milky Way* hovers near enough to lend a sardonic touch to the would-be heart-throb.

The trouble with 100 *Men and a Girl*—but did I remark that the faithful hundred are unemployed musicians whom Miss Durbin, with tears and laughter and grit and luck and a hat with a dear little feather sticking out of the top, welds into a very Wurlitzer of orchestras for the sake of trombonist daddy, and even persuades the great maestro to cancel his European tour to conduct it?—the trouble with the film is that it is so crashingly B.O. that the critical pen crosses a bashful nib before the niagara of ninepences for which it is so surely destined. It has sure gone over big in Iowa, where, according to the "Motion Picture Herald," that Bible of the Box-office, "it seemed to bring out new faces and possibly the better class trade," and that, mind you, in an exceptionally rainy week. Myself, I enjoyed the comics, and was overwhelmed at the technical triumphs of the recording. A new perspective of orchestral analysis is opened up by the elaborate dubbing, which gives to each group of instruments the exact balance that the presentation of the whole work requires. For this alone the film deserves a good mark, while Deanna Durbin's adolescent charm and choirboy voice corner the other honours.

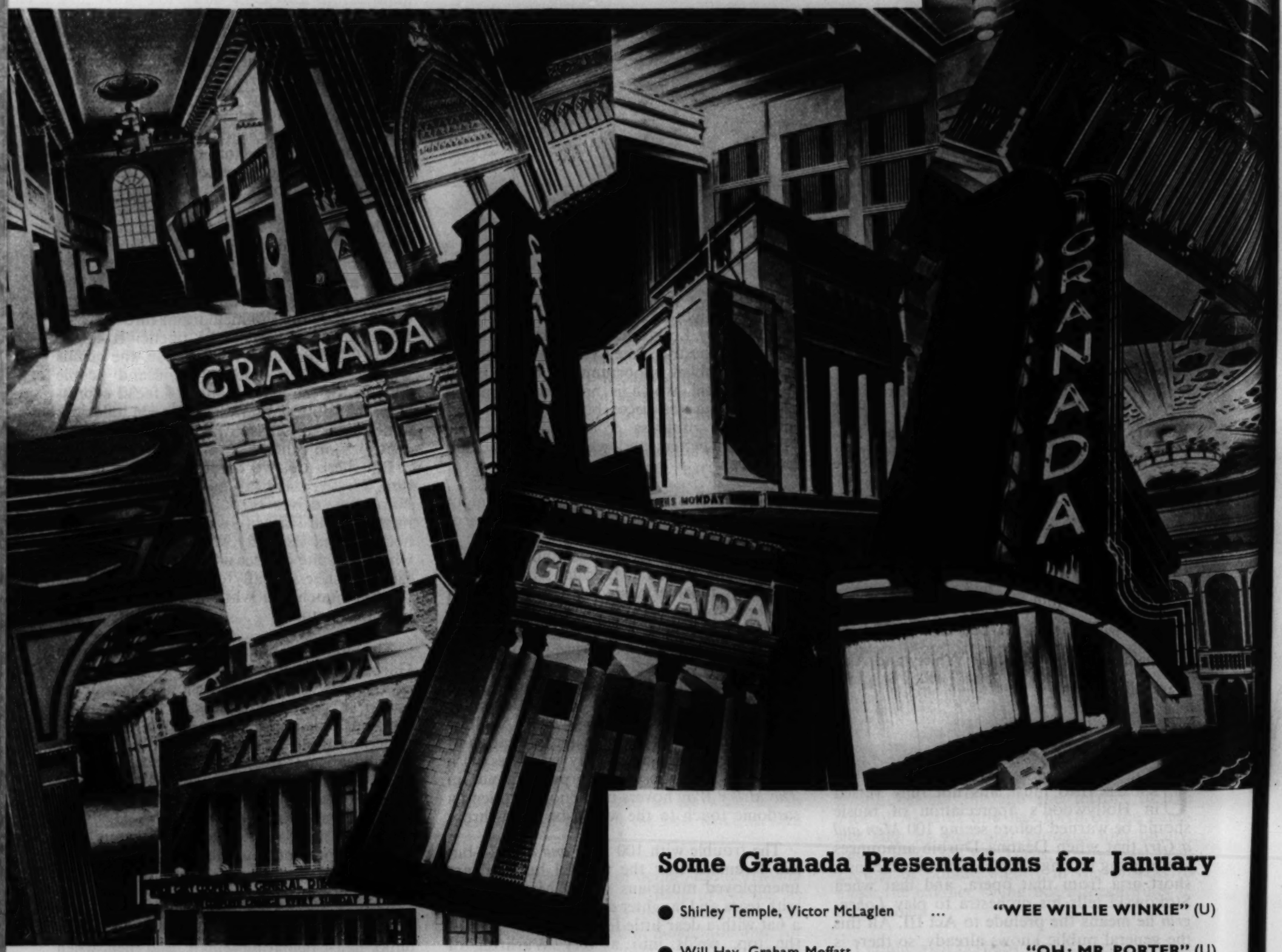
IF it were only that she is so extraordinarily beautiful, and that Karl Freund is such a genius at lighting, one could write off Garbo's performance as *Marie Walewska* in the usual fan terms. But there is so much more to it than the expressive mouth, the smooth frank Scandinavian forehead, and the graceful curves of a neck like that of Egyptian Nefertiti. There is, in fact, a genius which transcends the usual terms of acting and catches the unwary spectator bang in the mid-riff, an ability to identify herself, not just with the part she is playing, but with the universal humanities and our own silly little common denominators which are exactly the most important things in our own lives, an ability, in short, to carry even the banalities of melodrama into the rose-tinted stratosphere of the poetic. It is the genius of a Bernhardt or a Duse, the genius which holds breathless a thousand people waiting for the least change of facial expression, the subtlest alteration of vocal inflexion, and makes a self-sufficient vacuum in the centre of an otherwise ordinary stage cliché.

But there are two other revelations in this film. Firstly, there is Charles Boyer, who, as Napoleon, drives through the part with an intensity and sincerity which matches Garbo herself. And secondly, there is the dialogue, which, in spite of occasional lapses into Ruritanian lushness, really does in content and rhythm match the white-hot fervour of the principal actors.

The film is indeed a dialogue between Garbo and Boyer, and for all the magnificence of the sets, and the occasional spectacular scenes, it is in the intimacies of these two that the film finds its real form. Boyer, as Napoleon, interprets the man of action who passes from idealism (the desire of a peaceful federation of European States) to the dictator mentality, caused by the personal power he gains when trying to impose his ideals by force and force only. The lively vigour with which he presents the internal clash between his personal emotions *qua* Marie and his personal emotions *qua* Emperor is beautifully conceived. Garbo, no less accomplished, gives herself to Napoleon, "to save Poland," half-child, half-calculating female, and then, when she really falls in love with him, lights up with a personal brilliance of feeling which glows around her in happiness and disaster for the rest of the film.

To be conscious of the defects of *Marie Walewska* one would have to divorce it from its two principal players, around whom it is so carefully built. This being impossible, one is left wondering how much credit should go to director Clarence Brown for the unerring psychological accuracy which invests an ordinary costume romance with something of poetry, and much of true humanity. On what happens if you dislike Garbo and Boyer it is not my province to speculate.

14 GRANADAS
make their bow to 1938



Some Granada Presentations for January

- Shirley Temple, Victor McLaglen ... **"WEE WILLIE WINKIE"** (U)
- Will Hay, Graham Moffatt ... ... **"OH: MR. PORTER"** (U)
- Marlene Dietrich, Robert Donat **"KNIGHT WITHOUT ARMOUR"** (A)
- Irene Dunne, Randolph Scott **"HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME"** (U)
- Jessie Matthews ... ... **"GANGWAY"** (A)
- George Arliss ... ... **"DR. SYN"** (A)
- Paul Robeson ... ... **"BIG FELLA"** (U)
- Loretta Young, Don Ameche ... ... **"LOVE UNDER FIRE"** (U)

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. . . . WITH A SMILE

THE BERNSTEIN THEATRES LIMITED - - 36 GOLDEN SQUARE - - LONDON, W.1

The MONTH'S RELEASES

IN the very highest class is **The Good Earth,** with Paul Muni and Luise Rainer. A film based upon Pearl Buck's novel of the same name, and picturising peasant life in China. The small-farmer's never-ending struggle to wrest a living from sun-baked soil, against typhoon, drought and locust plague; catching something of the incredible bravery and patience of these poor-folk—of all poor folk for that matter.

The lives and struggles of real people are the theme of another January release: the heartening-ly realistic British film **The Edge of the World.** Authentically backgrounded in the Shetland Islands and carrying a simple and enthralling little story about the people there. Deserves your support. The welcome accorded to this picture is an interesting contrast to the less favourable reception accorded to the more pretentious **Knight Without Armour,** in which they make the Russian Revolution look like a Drury Lane Musical. The rest of the film is about the adventures of an upstanding young Englishman, played by Robert Donat, and a high-class Russian lady postured by Marlene Dietrich.

A special word of praise for **A Star is Born,** a picture in colour, but this time the colour isn't

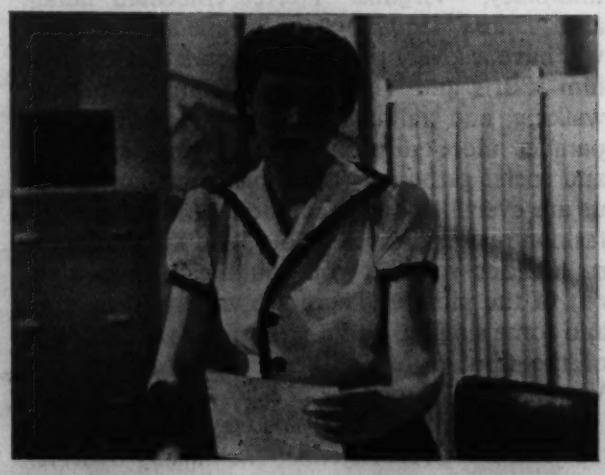
put on to smear over story and acting weaknesses. Here is the film city of Hollywood as it sees itself—and not very nice either. The story of a young girl's rise to stardom is given authenticity and poignancy by the contrasting story of the fall from well-established public favour of her husband. Janet Gaynor acts the rising young film actress easily and pleasantly and Fredric March the falling-star husband with restraint and quiet effectiveness. With first-rate performances by Lionel Stander and Adolphe Menjou, **A Star is Born** is one of the most moving and beautiful films out of Hollywood for a long time.

Amid the riot of comedy to be seen this month, make a point of seeing **Easy Living,** the best of the crazy comedies. With Jean Arthur and Edward Arnold it is a racy and amusing film about a fur coat and a typist. **Way Out West** is the new full-length Laurel and Hardy film, praised very highly by Basil Wright on pages 16-17. **Wild Money** is an Edward Everett Horton picture. Horton blossoms out as a tough guy and succeeds in being as amusing in this role as in his previous role of the mild, exasperated kick-around. There is a great deal of enjoyment in this picture, and in **Cafe Metropole,** with Adolphe Menjou again monopolising the acting honours.

There are no westerns deserving of special mention this month, the month's Hopalong Cassidy—**North of the Rio Grande**—being a bit below the standard of the earlier ones in this series. **High, Wide and Handsome** doesn't come into this class, though it has a few throw-backs to the western. If there had been more movement and more action and less high and low class singing, dancing and loving, it might have been a great picture. Mamoulian is the kind of director who has just the right eye for horses galloping, for waggon wheels digging in the trail-ruts, for men in crowds and in fights, for the pull of the gun and the hard ride of the posse, that are the essentials of the western. But his fancy notions get in the way: there's a long drawn-out business about a home on a hill-top that provides a song and frequent upsets between the hero and heroine; and the discovery of oil on the very spot chosen for the home on the hill-top loses any possible excitement by the determination of Mamoulian to symbolise the significance of it to his married couple by sprinkling the wedding dress and the clothes of the guests with the oil which pours forth. And, throughout, the action is impeded by love-scenes, songs and dances, and a determination to produce some pretty still-life studies. Offhand I can't think of anything that's been left out of this picture—from love to circuses—so if you go to the pictures on the principle that somewhere in the show, sometime, there'll be something you'll like, you might easily find it in this film.

Against this arty anaemia set **Kid Galahad,** a first-rate, full-blooded boxing yarn with Edward G. Robinson and Humphrey Bogart to guarantee tough stuff of the right quality. It shows the shady side of the boxing game and has some unusually realistic fight sequences. The best boxing picture, it is said, since **Patent Leather Kid.** There is a grand free-for-all at the end of **Big City.** This is the story of a taxi-cab war in New York. Not a patch on Cagney's **Taxi,** but there's enough of the old Spencer Tracy left to make this film well worth seeing.

Among the other releases is **Gangway,** the new Jessie Matthews picture. Jessie is as perky as ever but the strong arm stuff in the film—in spite of the able assistance of Nat Pendleton—doesn't ring true, as indeed it seldom does in British pictures. **You Can't Have Everything** features Alice Faye, and the Ritz Brothers working very hard. In the realm of unsophistication there is Will Hay as the railway porter in **Oh, Mr. Porter;** and Charlie Ruggles has an almost straight part in a vigorous newspaper story **Exclusive.**



The Good Earth (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
DIRECTOR: Sidney Franklin
STARRING: Paul Muni
Luise Rainer
(Reviewed April and May *W.F.N.*)

The Edge of the World (Joe Rock Productions—British Independent).
DIRECTOR: Michael Powell
STARRING: Niall McGinnis
Belle Chrystal
John Laurie
Finlay Currie
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

Knight Without Armour (London Films—United Artists).
DIRECTOR: Jacques Feyder
STARRING: Marlene Dietrich
Robert Donat
John Clements
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

A Star is Born (United Artists).
DIRECTOR: William Wellman
STARRING: Janet Gaynor
Fredric March
Adolphe Menjou
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

Easy Living (Paramount).
DIRECTOR: Mitchell Leisen
STARRING: Jean Arthur
Edward Arnold
Ray Milland
(Reviewed Sept. *W.F.N.*)

Way Out West (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
DIRECTOR: James W. Horne
STARRING: Stan Laurel
Oliver Hardy

Wild Money (Paramount).
DIRECTOR: Louis King
STARRING: Edward Everett Horton
Louise Campbell
(Reviewed Sept. *W.F.N.*)

Cafe Metropole (20th Century-Fox).
DIRECTOR: E. H. Griffith
STARRING: Loretta Young
Tyrone Power
Adolphe Menjou
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

High, Wide and Handsome (Paramount).
DIRECTOR: Rouben Mamoulian
STARRING: Irene Dunne
Randolph Scott
Dorothy Lamour
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

Kid Galahad (Warner Bros.).
DIRECTOR: Michael Curtiz
STARRING: Edward G. Robinson
Bette Davis
Humphrey Bogart
Wayne Morris

Big City (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
DIRECTOR: Frank Borzage
STARRING: Luise Rainer
Spencer Tracy
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

Gangway (Gaumont-British).
DIRECTOR: Sonnie Hale
STARRING: Jessie Matthews
Barry Mackay
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

Exclusive (Paramount).
DIRECTOR: Alexander Hall
STARRING: Fred MacMurray
Frances Farmer
Charlie Ruggles
(Reviewed Dec. *W.F.N.*)

REVIEW OF REVIEWS Edited by H. E. Blyth

Stage Door

REVIEW OF THE MONTH

(Gregory La Cava—RKO Radio.)
Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn, Gail Patrick, Adolphe Menjou.

The RKO Radio version of *Stage Door* is not merely a brilliant picture (although that should be enough), but happens as well to be a magnificently devastating reply on Hollywood's behalf to all the catty little remarks that George Kaufman and Edna Ferber had made about it in their play.

Those impolite playwrights, you remember, had filled the mouths of the aspirant Bernhardts of their Footlights Club with gall and wormwood whenever the Hollywood topic arose, which was fairly constantly. It was, we were told, a factory and a graveyard of art, a place of complete untalent and all-pervading witlessness, of sables for the body and starvation for the soul, etc.—all very wittily expressed and neatly packaged (through the courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer which had backed the show).

For a factory and a graveyard and other unpleasant institutions, Hollywood has done some rather incredible things with the Kaufman-Ferber contribution, not the least of them being the transformation of a fragile piece of theatrical wishful-willing into a far more soundly contrived comedy drama. Script-writers Morrie Ryskind and Anthony Veiller have taken the play's name, its setting and part of its theme and have built a whole new structure which is wittier than the original, more dramatic than the original, more meaningful than the original, more cogent than the original.

Where the team of K & F (who really should have been ashamed) drew Hollywood as the leering man with the waxed black moustache, RKO has countered by showing that the villain of all serious acting fledglings is the Broadway producer who is too busy to look and listen. But with this premise, which was the whole sum of the stage's *Stage Door*, the film edition had only begun its narrative. Back it goes to the Footlights Club where the stagestruck maidens nurse their disappointments and sharpen their claws (on whatever victim is handy) and gossip betimes over the triangular sham battle being fought by Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn and Gail Patrick over and around Adolphe Menjou.

Miss Hepburn (to put this outburst into some sort of order) is the wealthy girl with stage notions and a serious outlook. Miss Rogers is the more realistic type. Miss Patrick has decided to play her producers offstage. Mr. Menjou is the rake who has his better side. Miss Andrea Leeds, the real discovery of the picture, is the tortured young woman who has waited a year for the One Role. There are the other young ladies of the ensemble, and a cleverly individualised bevy they are, whose several destinies tragically or comically counterpoint those of the primary four.

"Cabaret sequences . . . a show in themselves . . ."

The twists and turns of the narrative are sensibly motivated, the direction of Gregory La Cava has given it zest and pace and photographic eloquence, and the performances are amazingly good—considering that Mr. Kaufman's Hollywood is just a canning factory. Miss Hepburn and Miss Rogers, in particular, seemed to be acting so far above their usual heads that, frankly, we hardly recognised them. A round of curtain calls would demand a bow and smile from Constance Collier, Lucille Ball, Franklin Pangborn, Eve Arden, Ann Miller, Margaret Early and Phyllis Kennedy, among the many others. And now, do we hear a retraction from Mr. Kaufman?

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

Vogues of 1938

(Irving Cummings—United Artists.)
Warner Baxter, Joan Bennett, Mischa Auer, Alan Mowbray.

The sort of woman who likes to pore over the pages of fashion magazines and dress catalogues, studying plates of "Iris" (soft angora, in rust and mid-blue), "Virginia" (velvet embossed lamé), and "Diana" (model gown in tulle and sequins), will have a lovely time with *Vogues of* 1938. The film is Iris and Virginia and Diana in person, walking and talking, posing and turning, in parades more glittering, salons more spacious, and social gatherings more brilliant than any of us are ever likely to encounter. Like all the best fashion reviews, it is in colour, and the shades are so luscious you feel you could pick them right out of the picture. There are variety turns, too, and some singing, and a hint of drama, but most of the film is just glorious bevies of Iris and Virginia and Diana.

Modom, will you step this way?

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

At the first glance this looks like one for the womenfolk. And it is. But men who dismiss it as a photographed dress show will miss some of the best revue-esque interludes since *The King of Jazz*, a wittily written comedy, Joan Bennett, and easily the best Technicolor yet. Joan Bennett and Technicolor make a theme to linger on. Having met the girl, I knew she was more attractive than the camera had ever made her, but now comes the colour film to do justice to a beautiful subject.

I mentioned *The King of Jazz*. I am prepared to stand by the view that this is the best, most original, most decorative and generally most entertaining musical film since that celebrated milestone in the path from and to the glory of the cinema. The cabaret sequences are a show in themselves and Walter Wanger is to be commended for a production that provides the best all-round night-out available currently in London screenland.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

Stand-In

(Tay Garnett—United Artists.)
Leslie Howard, Joan Blondell, Humphrey Bogart.

When Hollywood decides, as from time to time it does, to turn a quizzical eye upon its own curious activities it shows a commendable fairness of mind and sense of its own shortcomings. In this instance up to a point only, for, overcome by the devastating lines of the portrait-caricature it is drawing, it rubs them out and finishes in the manner of a comic strip. "We don't make pictures, we re-make them!" says someone in this film, and this remark, together with Lester Plum's (Miss Joan Blondell) devastating comments on the habits of film stars, strikes what should have been the key of the whole film, but the true note is heard only occasionally in the discords of exaggerated farce. The acting of Miss Blondell and Mr. Howard, to say nothing of the basic idea of the film, screams aloud for satirical comedy, and what it gets, apart from two or three scenes which are a delight, is the kind of thing that can be done as well by the comic men in the pantomime. Long before Mr. Howard practises ju-jutsu on a Hollywood magnate, hurls a juicy tomato at a bogus director, loses his glasses, and is meant to be terribly funny groping about in a haze of

"Far above their usual heads . . ."

"Joyous Hollywood fantasia . . ."

short-sightedness, it is apparent that *Stand-In*, brilliant in its infancy, suffers from incurable arrested development.

—*The Times*

Stand-In is a joyous and nonsensical Hollywood fantasia. It reveals, but not too closely, the more amusing secrets of the studios, and the chicaneries of film finance. It allows Leslie Howard and Joan Blondell to exercise their muscles, their acting abilities, and their personal charm, all of which are quite considerable. The scene of the continental director demanding real edelweiss amid the artificial snow (one heard the ghostly echo of Donald Duck from *Alpine Climbers*) is one of the prettiest laughs that Hollywood has ever engineered against itself; and the macabre parody of child-prodigies is almost savage in its solemn accuracy.

—Basil Wright, *The Spectator*

Critical Summary.

Since film producers, like punters, believe in following winning form, it is probable that we are in for quite a number of stories, satirical or otherwise, about Hollywood and the lives of the stars, now that "A Star is Born" has proved such a success. Actually the public have never shown any great desire to be shown behind the scenes in the studios—perhaps such stories are apt to bring both them and their idols down to earth with too much of a bump—but whatever the reason this phase will no doubt be short lived. 42nd Street probably provides safer material than the Hollywood Boulevard.

Marie Walewska

(Clarence Brown—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Greta Garbo, Charles Boyer.

If *Marie Walewska* cost the $3,800,000 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has said it did, the company was overcharged. For the new film, with all the munificence of its production, with all the starring strength of a Greta Garbo and a Charles Boyer, is merely a surface show. It goes no deeper than the images its screen reflects and we can watch it, and study it, as academically as we would a procession of ants underneath a magnifying glass. Mr. Boyer's Napoleon does not fire the imagination, stir pity or encourage respect; Miss Garbo's Marie Walewska is a creature built upon illogic. We follow the destinies of both with interest, but not compassion; and compassion is all-important in a romantic tragedy.

Clarence Brown has directed this study of Napoleon and his favourite mistress with a splendid eye for detail and an astigmatism for the main fact. The main fact missed is the necessity for a logical explanation of Walewska's surrender to her Napoleonic hero.

Writers, director and cast seem to have been warned repeatedly that *Marie Walewska* was an "important" film. These producer's vapourings, inspired no doubt by thoughts of that $3,800,000 budget, have staled the cast, forced it into a precisely timed, carefully executed series of readings which lack the spontaneity and naturalness one hopes to encounter in a skilled troupe. Miss Garbo seems particularly stilted; Mr. Boyer, with a more clearly defined character to play and with a remarkable physical fitness for the rôle, fares better. His Napoleon dominates Walewska as thoroughly on the screen as he did in fact.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

W.F.N. Selection.

Stand-In	*	*
The Last Gangster	*	*
Dead End	*	*
Marie Walewska	*	*
100 *Men and a Girl*	*	

Other films covered in this issue.

Stage Door (Stars reserved)

Vogues of 1938

Triumph

Dr. Syn

Wife, Doctor and Nurse

The Sky's the Limit

Abyssinia

The Path of the Heroes

Club des Femmes

Squadrone Bianco

There are two things to consider about this picture. The first is financial, the second is a lesson in disillusionment, showing that time marches on and all things change—Greta Garbo has had a picture stolen from her. As ever, she is beautiful and fey, and gorgeously gowned by Adrian. But Charles Boyer is the one to watch. His Napoleon is one of the best characterisations to come to the screen this year (there is only Mr. Paul Muni's *Zola* to compete with it). His stature is right, his accent is right, his posture is right, and the magicians of the make-up department have made his nose right, too. He is a thoroughly convincing Napoleon, and if there is any higher praise to accord to a characterisation of Napoleon Bonaparte, of all people, then we'll add it on when we think of it. As a story, *Marie Walewska* reaches no crescendos. As an actor's show-window it is excellent. And the most excellent part of it is Boyer's Bonaparte.

—*Stage*

Triumph

(Michael Wayman — World Commonwealth Films.)
Anonymous cast.

Triumph is a sincere and often beautiful picture, and a real break in the right direction. As Lord Hollenden said, in an introductory speech, it is not necessarily wrong if it departs from nursery picture-book ideas. World Commonwealth Films is on a non-profit making basis, and it has a definite spiritual object—the proclamation that "the secret of strong manhood lies in the values of Christ." *Triumph* sets out not so much to show us One who walked the earth 2,000 years ago as to reveal the power of His spirit all down the ages. The Christ of this film, I think, is too old a man, and the recording of His voice is not all that could be desired. But, "a distinct advance on Oberammergau," was one verdict I heard, and it came from one by whose judgment I set special store.

—Hugh Redwood, *News-Chronicle*

This film is a sermon on Fear and the unconquerable power of Truth. Acted with conviction and great sincerity by an anonymous cast, and most notably by those who play the part of the Disciples, the film first describes several incidents, both Biblical and imaginary, in the life of Christ, and then goes on to show how others, both before and after, have been inspired by His ideal in their search for Truth—Socrates and Joan of Arc accepting death for their convictions, St. Francis of Assisi scorning the world's riches, Leonardo inspired by the ideal to paint his masterpiece, "The Last Supper," and Lincoln working to give freedom to the American slave. The film has been treated with reverence and affection, the desired effects being achieved with admirable simplicity and restraint, so that it remains a devout work and at all times an impressive one, and yet somehow too non-committal and indefinite—a sermon that might have emanated from a secluded country vicarage, far from the hurly-burly of modern life.

—*The Times*

Dr. Syn

(Roy William Neill—Gaumont-British.)
George Arliss, Margaret Lockwood, John Loder, Roy Emerton.

I wish it was possible to say nicer things about *Dr. Syn*, but veracity forbids. It has a poor unconvincing story of running contraband at Dymchurch, in Romney Marsh, in which George Arliss, as the Vicar, smuggles for the good of the community and the glory of God. In the many previous parts in which I have seen George Arliss he has always been telling and incisive, and often humorous; but as Dr. Syn—and no wonder!—he has lost definition, both as a clergyman with the double life and as a mobile scarecrow. He can believe in the fable no more than we.

—E. V. L., *Punch*

"Thoroughly convincing Napleon . . ."

"Too spry for the villains . . ."

Dr. Syn—continued.

This is harmless schoolboy stuff, a kind of bootlegger story in fancy dress. The Doctor of the sketch, a pastor—the Arliss rôle, of course—has been a pirate in his hey-day, and he is busy now smuggling in his seaside parish. His past overtakes him at last, but he is too spry for the villains who pursue him, and makes an audacious escape. Low-class such things may seem, but Mr. Arliss lends the wicked doings a handsome veneer, wears a peruque with a grand air, and may show even members of the Knickerbocker Club how a gentleman can sail under the skull and bones.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

100 Men and a Girl

(Henry Koster—Universal.)
Leopold Stokowski, Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou.

Joe Pasternak, first guide of Deanna Durbin, has done a beautiful job in developing her. She's really the personification of pure, adolescent joy. Stokowski is a very real figure in the film. The theme is highly worthy; the story is original, and adroitly built up. Considering the setting—among unemployed musicians, the tone of the entire piece is extraordinarily gay. And it's not fluff. For one-line satire, it is difficult to think of a movie scene that tops the bit where one millionaire, reading his newspaper, blurps, "This is outrageous!" and the second millionaire automatically drawls, "What have they done in Washington now?" And for sheer pictorial climax, the rag-tag symphony orchestra grouped around the stairwell in the maestro's home is something to remember. . . . A German film about a symphony orchestra won a prize a year ago; Hollywood's entry is an infinitely better story, as well as a better frame for the symphony music.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

What a find this girl is. Her voice, clear, round, mellow, mature, is but a portion of her equipment. She is as natural a player as Gary Cooper. And, if you seek a contrast to her clear-cut acting ability, watch her co-star, the famous Leopold Stokowski, prove his lack of it. Stokowski is a musician, a conductor. His closed eyes and his electric hands are effective only as long as he is in his musical element; as soon as he plays another part he is uncomfortable. Neat, amusing, unexaggerated, this is undoubtedly one of the best films of the year. And it has some grand recordings by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra and the Durbin voice in songs as different as Mozart's "Alleluja" and somebody's "It's Raining Sunbeams."

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

Critical Summary.

The cynics of the trade were not long ago prophesying an early relapse into obscurity for two young players who have recently made a sensational entry into films—Deanna Durbin and Sonja Henie. But both, it now seems, are indeed such stuff as stars are made of, for each has made of her second picture an even greater success than her first. The growing popularity of Deanna Durbin and Marlene Dietrich's loosening grip on her public seem to provide a nice commentary on film fashions, and offer a suggestion as to what the film-goer will be demanding from his entertainment in 1938.

Wife, Doctor and Nurse

(Walter Lang—20th Century-Fox.)
Warner Baxter, Loretta Young, Virginia Bruce.

At last it's happened. I've been hoping, but not expecting (because I have heard about the British Film Censor and the Hays office) that one of these unhappy triangles would end in a *ménage à trois*. And in *Wife, Doctor and Nurse* I am danged if it does not. You see there is a handsome, hard-working doctor with two lovely women in love with him, his nurse and his wife. At the end of this film the three of them go merrily off, arm in arm—doctor in the middle—and then they all slip on a wet patch of flooring and fall merrily down. Surely that is better than suicide, murder, heartbreak, marrying a staid old somebody else, or any other way out. *Wife, Doctor and Nurse* has the usual background of emergency operations, but most of it is pleasant comedy. And its ending is, well, unique. Miss Young has never looked more lovely, nor has Miss Bruce been more adorable, and it seems to me that Baxter is the luckiest doctor to flaunt hygiene on the screen.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

Wife, Doctor and Nurse is one of those slick second-rate Hollywood pictures which give innocent delight to millions who don't know the formula, just as any old clock is amazing if you can't imagine what makes it tick. The wife (Loretta Young) is pretty and gay, the nurse (Virginia Bruce) is pretty and useful, with a nice hand for stroking aching temples and a lap the doctor (Warner Baxter) likes to rest his head on when exhausted. And he is exhausted on and off through most of seven reels. Eventually, of course, wife and nurse dispute possession of the doctor. The story ends with their agreeing amicably to share him each after her fashion. Personally, I couldn't learn to care.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

Critical Summary.

In these columns last month comment was made on the way Hollywood has consistently degraded its country's press. Almost as farcical in our eyes, though admittedly far less vicious, is the American hospital. It is, of course, amazingly efficient with its spotless operating-tables, its masked figures, its wonderful equipment and miraculous modern contrivances, but the effect is utterly spoilt by the persistent intrusion, not of germs, but of Love. Surgeons combat epidemics, but are powerless before passion, doctors desire nurses and nurses desire intrigue, while patients repeatedly bring broken hearts, as well as broken limbs, into the wards. The effect of such stories must surely be to shake the public's faith in its medical practitioners, and that is a very serious thing indeed.

The Sky's the Limit

(Jack Buchanan and Lee Garmes—Jack Buchanan Productions.)
Jack Buchanan, David Hutcheson, Athene Seyler, Sara Allgood.

There is something about Jack Buchanan. . . . Beyond the endearing drollery, the soft attractive voice, the lazy step-dancing, the hint of fragility, there is an entirely personal quality that eludes his imitators. He can make a feast of enjoyment out of what, on the face of it, is rather thin fare. Athene Seyler and Sara Allgood are among those who help to keep the ball rolling, and Mara Losseff is an animated new charmer in British pictures. But it is the presence of Jack Buchanan that makes this worth seeing.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

If *The Sky's the Limit* were a work of art, it would be catalogued as *Scuola Inglese*. In characterisation, tempo, humour and story, it is all very English. Many people will prefer it this way. It would be silly to deny that *The Sky's the Limit* has certain defects—greyness here and there in the photography, a certain shrillness in the recording, and the intrusion of two small boys addicted to reciting their lines. The fact remains that it is the best film Mr. Buchanan has made, and should have a considerable success with the public.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

Critical Summary.

Like Gracie Fields, Jack Buchanan is an artist whose undoubted talents have never been properly exploited on the screen. Lubitsch admittedly directed him with the usual skill in "Monte Carlo", in which Jeannette MacDonald also appeared, but his English pictures have too often been distressing affairs of the inevitable mistaken identity—mildly naughty—man-about-town—pyjama and bedroom type of farce of which "This'll Make You Whistle" was a good example. That he should have been thus engaged on the screen is all the more regrettable when it is considered how very few really personable and talented leading men the English studios possess.

"Exhausted on and off for seven reels . . ."

Abyssinia

(Production: Soyuskinochronika—Russian.)

The Path of the Heroes

(Production: Luca Films—Italian.)

The chatterers, for once, were completely subdued at the last performance of the Film Society. Although coming eighteen months too late for any immediate practical use, the two films *Abyssinia* and *The Path of the Heroes* gave a pretty effective picture of the realities of the Ethiopian conquest. The method of presentation did the Film Society credit. To have shown the two films quite separately might have been tedious. Instead alternate reels of both films were shown in chronological succession. First, reels from the Russian film (*Abyssinia*) showing the primitive life of the country, its people, their agriculture and villages, and then reels from the Italian film (*Path of the Heroes*) showing in detail all the preliminary military preparations for the war. We thus had the necessary background for what was to follow—on the one side a primitive, undeveloped country, devoid of all modern military resources but determined to fight for its independence, and on the other a militarised, totalitarian State intent on destroying the last vestige of that independence.

The last three reels (two Italian and one Russian) could not but create a profound impression. First, the Italian air raids over Abyssinian territory, war planes dropping their cargoes of bombs over defenceless villages, a veritable path for heroes. Then, from the Russian film the actual results of the destruction wrought by the heroes. Villages destroyed and burnt out. Men, women and children with skins burnt by mustard gas. A British Red Cross encampment bombed to pieces. Then the last reel of the Italian film. Cheering thousands in the streets of Rome, and over it the orations of Public Hero Number One, Mussolini.

Technically, the two films were well contrasted. The Russian film claimed to be little more than a newsreel record, shot by two cameramen working under constant difficulties. They have given a straightforward narrative of what they were able to see, and not the least impressive of their material are the close-ups of Abyssinian people, peasants, and soldiers, the men with an impressive and simple dignity, the women often beautiful. Somehow it conveyed a sense of frustration, a people willing to fight but unknowingly doomed to defeat. For its authentic pictures of the effect of aerial warfare on ordinary people the film is worth its weight in gold.

The Italian film was obviously the result of much laboured effort and financial assistance. It omitted no important detail of military preparation and strove so hard to impress the world with the might of Italy's industrial and military machine. The whole film literally swarmed with heroes, heroes leaving Italy on troopships, heroes landing in Africa, heroes digging roads, heroes flying aeroplanes and even heroines tending the happily wounded heroes in hospitals.

To give it its due it did build up a sense of efficiency but in a purely impersonal, mechanical way.

Again congratulations to the Film Society. For once it can claim to have served a socially useful purpose.

—Ralph Bond, *World Film News*

Club des Femmes

(Jacques Deval—French.)

Danielle Darrieux, Valentine Tessier, Betty Stockfield, Eve Francis, Josette Day, Else Argal.

The accident of *Stage Door* opening roughly at the same time with *Club des Femmes*, a French film on a similar theme, together with the further accident of my having seen in the same week with both of them a 1932 film called *Virtue*, arouses me to make some remarks on the subject of censorship. *Club des Femmes* has suffered at the last moment some cuttings and tinkerings which are perhaps ridiculous rather than vicious since they do not obscure the original quality of the whole. The story, briefly, is of a Parisian home for young working women, a home which "protects" them from men a little more than they wish to be protected; more at any rate than one of them does, since she smuggles her boy friend into her room one night and in good time becomes a mother. Jacques Deval has handled the episode with charming taste; but the New York censors have vulgarised it with mendacious subtitles assuring those who cannot understand French that the boy and girl are married, though how even a deaf mute could believe this I cannot guess. Such damage, in other words, is superficial. A graver kind of damage is being done all American films through the fear of General Hays, Inc., lest his native public grow up. I perceived as much rather vaguely while I watched the Menjou-Rogers scenes in *Stage Door*, scenes which were ambiguous because somebody, or rather everybody, had been afraid to make it clear just what was happening to Ginger's character, or whether anything was. But my perceptions were sharpened by *Virtue* which shows how even in five years a glaze of foolish innocence has formed over our screen. *Virtue* was direct and strong as no film can be to-day, and in its thoroughgoing fashion it was wholesome, whether or not it dealt with the lives of prostitutes. We might sacrifice our present safety for at least one such film a year. It would do us good, and it would keep the art as healthy as a sound apple. Most of it now is odourless, being artificial fruit.

—Mark Van Doren, *The Nation*

Critical Summary.

The excessive sanctity of the Hays organisation is becoming a millstone around the producer's neck, for if salaciousness on the screen is no more, cleanliness has been carried to the other extreme, and the powers of the American studios to use the film for social indictment have been sadly curtailed in consequence. Vice, for example, has always been one of the American gangster's basic sources of income, yet how many films which have set out to condemn the gangster régime have been able to even so much as hint at this most loathesome aspect of the crime lord's profession? The classic example of Hays refinement was forthcoming recently: shots of Marlene Dietrich in her bath were sternly censored, but when in "Artists and Models," a girl was seen, apparently naked, in her bath, the sequence was passed as she subsequently stood up and revealed that she was wearing a bathing dress.

"Character and chin improve . . ."

Squadrone Bianco

(Augusto Genina—Italian.)

Antonio Centa, Fosco Giachetti, Fulvia Lanzi.

Crossed in love—and this episode, at any rate, has a Latin exuberance and force—the principal character in this Italian film goes to Africa to shoot, not big game, but rebel natives. The motive, however, is not the right one; they have had too many of these disappointed men in Africa, and when the new lieutenant turns up in the place of a man who loved the work for its own sake he is severely snubbed by his captain. When one observes the captain—he is usually photographed from below, a device which exaggerates the size of the chin but diminishes that of the forehead—it seems unlikely that the lieutenant will ever be his equal, but it is not long before his opportunity comes. An expedition starts across the desert and endures intolerable hardships; all the time the lieutenant's character and his chin improve, until, when the captain is killed, he is able to take his place. Moreover, the treatment is doubly effective; the lieutenant's faithless lady already impressed by his attempt to throttle her before leaving, follows him to Africa, and he has the supreme satisfaction of explaining that he no longer loves her; he has become another man.

The chief merit of the film is in the photography of the desert and of marching camels; there are many extremely impressive scenes but they have the effect of retarding the story and the action.

—*The Times*

Technically, except for a tendency to repeat effects, *Squadrone Bianco* is a first-class example of Italian film-craft. It won the Mussolini Cup at the Venice International Film Exhibition last year. It has an emotionalism that rings extravagantly and with exaggerated emphasis on our colder years; but we can comprehend Rome responding immediately to its patriotic appeal, its musical accompaniment and its wonderful pageantry. We cannot help emerging from this picture asking questions that can never be answered. Why should Imperialism demand of humanity so much apparently worthless sacrifice? What is there in a leafless and waterless desert that induces brave and unselfish men to track down and shoot others just to wave a flag in a breezeless sky?

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

● Great Britain

Denham

And now, after weeks of talk and negotiations and press stories, the Goldwyn-Korda-United Artists deal has fizzled out like a damp squib.

Official reason given is that the deal in its present form might constitute a violation of co-poration law and involve payment of heavy taxes in the United States. Real trouble, however, seems to be that since Selznick has decided to withdraw from the company, and Mervyn LeRoy has joined forces with M.G.M. instead of U.A., Goldwyn and Korda are not so sure that the business is worth the £1,200,000 asked by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charles Chaplin.

Release of London Films' productions continues through United Artists, and plans go ahead without alteration.

With *He Was Her Man* in the cutting room well on schedule, Sam Engel, Fox chief in this country, has been working on a second story for Gracie Fields. Picture will be adapted from Jane Pembridge's short story *Beloved Enemy* (no connection with the Merle Oberon picture of the same name), turning on the rivalry between a music-hall star and legitimate stage actress, and covering the period 1912–1918.

Luis Trenker is back from location shooting on the Matterhorn, and busy on interiors for *The Challenge*, a German version of which is also being made. Trenker was once guide in the Dolomites.

Herbert Wilcox, on returning from America, congratulated everybody concerned on the success of *Victoria the Great* in America—and in the same breath declared that British pictures have never been so scornfully despised in the U.S.A. as they are to-day.

Teddington

Irving Asher is glowing with pleasure over the success of the musical show *Hide and Seek*, with Bobbie Howes and Cicely Courtneidge. This is the first stage show that Warners have put on, and indicates a growing practice among film companies of backing plays in order to have full screen rights without paying huge sums for successes. *Hide and Seek* will be made at Teddington sometime next year.

Films on the floor are *Simply Terrific*, with Claude Hulbert, Reginald Purdell and Patricia Medina (who graduated to pictures by way of the *Daily Mail* beauty competition), and directed by Roy William Neill; and *Love Insurance*, with Gene Gerrard and Betty Lynne, and Arthur Woods directing. In the cutting room are *Thistledown*, with Aino Bergo, and *The Viper* with Claude Hulbert.

Elstree

Negotiations for the purchase of Amalgamated Studios are now under way by Josef von Sternberg, financed by French money for the production of features in French and English versions. Von Sternberg failed in an attempt to obtain financing from C. M. Woolf for British quota production, and went to France for the purpose.

Present plans call for the production of bilingual pictures, French versions being made with a French cast but with English technicians. Employment of the latter is cheaper than in France, where unions, the 40-hour-week and technician demands make profitable production more difficult.

In addition to features already scheduled, three pictures will probably be made with Marlene Dietrich following her one-picture Paramount commitment.

Richard Bird has started *The Terror*, with Bernard Lee and Wilfred Lawson. Picture is an Edgar Wallace thriller.

Paul Stein is directing *Sweet Racket*, sophisticated comedy with John Lodge, Gertrude Michael and Fred Emney.

For some weeks Associated British have been on the look-out for a suitable player for the lead in Arnold Bennett's *The Card*. Picture is scheduled for early production.

Islington

Comparative peace that descended on the Gainsborough studios after the completion of *O-Kay for Sound* is shattered. . . . the Crazy Gang is back for *Alf's Button Afloat*, adaption of the W. A. Darlington story, with the Gang as "the five mighty henchmen of the illustrious owner of the illustrious button," Alistair Sim as the Genii

> I know nothing about the film world. I don't want to know anything about it, and I hope I never shall.
> —*Lord Hewart.*

and Wally Patch as the sergeant. Marcel Varnel directs, Maurice Ostrer produces.

Next picture scheduled for the studios is *Convict* 99 for Will Hay.

Sound City

George King is so pleased with the work on *Sexton Blake and the Master Criminal* that he has taken an option on all the Sexton Blake stories for the next two years.

Triangle Productions are making *Silver Top* for Paramount quota when George King comes off the floor with his present picture. Story is by Evadne Price.

● America

United Artists

Honours due to Fred Albin, head sound technician at the Goldwyn studio, for the sound effects in *The Hurricane* . . . the sounds created by wind, waves, crashing trees and splintering houses, were produced on the screen by a small machine the size of a midget radio.

Walter Wanger has *The River is Blue*, Spanish story for Sylvia Sidney and Henry Fonda, and *The Arabian Nights*, ready for production. *Wuthering Heights*, for two years on Wanger's production schedule, will probably be put up for sale as the producer is reluctant to make such a sombre story. It is understood that M.G.M. have made a bid for the Ben Hecht script of the novel, and have a cast ready for early production.

Following reports in the American press that electrical advertising space on the Pyramids was to be let, Goldwyn applied to the Egyptian Legation in Washington for rates and conditions. If he acquires the rights to the space, he is to have large neon signs erected to advertise *The Adventures of Marco Polo*.

Publicity sheets from David Selznick's New York office announced that 6,000 years from now *A Star is Born* would be shown to a select audience of future historians. A print of the film has been given to Mr. Thornwell Jacobs for inclusion with other relics in a crypt in the Appalachian mountains—to be opened in 8113 A.D. The news comes as a surprise to Eastman Kodak, the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, the United States Government Department of Archives, Dupont Film, and others who for years have been searching for a formula to preserve film for half a century.

Paramount

Impressing Paramount executives with his comedy work in *True Confession*, John Barrymore is slated for similar parts in the future. First step will be pairing him off with W. C. Fields in *Things to Happen*.

Franciska Gaal, Hungarian actress, will be introduced to audiences by means of a short built around her discovery by Cecil B. DeMille, her call to Hollywood and subsequent training, and her work opposite Fredric March in *The Buccaneer*.

Mr. DeMille recently made this somewhat surprising announcement: "I have directed bathtub scenes which were influential in changing the ablutional habits and environments of all civilised countries. Inevitably I am identified with the more luxurious bathing fittings, but now the time has come to call a halt. I shall never direct another bathtub picture." Statement was made when people began to wonder how he was going to fit a bathtub scene into *The Buccaneer*.

Frances Dee has the feminine lead in *Marching Herds*, pageant of the reconstruction of Texas. Randolph Scott will play opposite.

Company has a patriotic film on the cards entitled *Millions for Defence*, which will "bring to the screen a drama based on the exploits of Stephen Decatur and the Barbary Pirates who infested the Mediterranean waters after the war of 1812." George Raft, Frances Farmer and Ray Milland are tentatively named for the cast.

M.G.M.

Said Louis B. Mayer the other day to some friends in Hollywood, after his visit to Europe: "If only every man and woman here, connected with the production of pictures, could see what I saw, lines and lines of people waiting to get into theatres running American pictures—and this in every country you visit—it would make them as proud as it did me to know that they were part of the Hollywood that gives so much entertainment to so many people."

David O. Selznick is now finally set at Metro, where he will have his own independent unit to make ten or twelve pictures over a period of two years. The Selznick-International unit, which formerly released through United Artists, will retain its identity, and yet be able to call on all the

playing and technical talent at M.G.M. Louis B. Mayer has been eager to obtain son-in-law Selznick's services in this direction for some time.

Recent Selznick pictures have been *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Garden of Allah*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *A Star is Born*. Previously he made *Viva Villa*, *David Copperfield*, *Vanessa* and *Anna Karenina* for M.G.M.

Mervyn LeRoy will also join the M.G.M. ranks as associate producer after he has finished *School for Scandal* (with Carole Lombard and Fernand Gravet) at Warners. He takes with him a four picture technicolour commitment, and Fernand Gravet, Lana Turner and Vicki Lester, all of whom are under personal contract to him.

Next Robert Taylor picture is taken from Francis Brett Young's novel *They Seek a Country*, story of the great Boer trek in South Africa. Jack Conway, who directed the star in *A Yank at Oxford*, is directing again, with Hunt Stromberg producing. Script is by Noel Langley, author of "Cage Me a Peacock," and "There's a Porpoise Close Behind Us."

Latest Joan Crawford picture in production is *Shopworn Angel*, from a *Saturday Evening Post* story by Dana Burnett.

Radio

In the May issue of *World Film News* Hugh Walpole pleaded for Radio to make a significant dancing film with Fred Astaire . . . now Radio is negotiating with Romola Nijinsky for screen rights of her biography of Nijinsky for an Astaire picture. After a legal tussle, book rights were relinquished last spring by Alexander Korda, who held them under option for three years.

Hepburn is committed to the cause of comedy in *Bringing Up Baby*. Contrary to the title significance the story is not a domestic one. . . . the baby is a leopard.

Walt Disney now has twenty cartoons in various stages of animation—five Donald Ducks, two Mickey Mouse solo starring vehicles, five with his gang, one with "Goofy" in his first starring role, and seven Silly Symphonies, one of which will re-unite the three little pigs and the big bad wolf. Leopold Stokowski, having made his film debut in 100 *Men and a Girl*, follows it up with 70 *Men and a Mouse*. He has made an agreement with Disney to provide the score, and in some fashion to be worked into the picture.

20th Century-Fox

Thin Ice, Sonja Henie's second picture, returned £218,000 in the first six weeks of its American release, which means it should cash in a good £700,000 altogether. These grosses certainly justify the faith which Darryl Zanuck had in Miss Henie, and now the young star's popularity is so great that she can forget her skates and do some straight acting. The Fox chief has even suggested that he might team her with Shirley Temple, since he caught Miss Henie teaching the latter how to skate the other day and thought they made a pretty pair.

Meanwhile the latest Henie picture, *Hot and Happy*, is on the way over here. Original title was *Bread, Butter and Rhythm.*

Shirley Temple herself has just completed *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (made twice before —once with Mary Pickford), and goes straight into *Susannah of the Mounted*, a modern comedy.

The Annabella–William Powell film, promised for so long, has at last been started, and re-titled *The Baroness and the Butler*. Gregory Ratoff has joined the cast, and Walter Lang directs. Other big picture on the floor is *Sally, Irene and Mary*, with Jimmy Durante, Slim Summerville, Alice Faye and Tony Martin.

Columbia

A joint announcement made by Frank Capra and Harry Cohen, President of Columbia Pictures, states that the differences which existed between them have been settled and the threatened litigation amicably disposed of. Capra has returned to the studios to work on *You Can't Take It With You*, scripted by Robert Riskin who worked with Capra on *Lost Horizon*.

Edward G. Robinson switches back to the right side of the law in his next picture for this company, to be based on the career of District Attorney-elect Thomas E. Dewey. Paul Gallico has been commissioned to write the screenplay, which will concentrate on Dewey's racket-busting activities. This is Robinson's second "outside" picture under his contract which permits him to make two pictures a year away from the Warner lot. His first was *The Last Gangster*. Currently he is engaged on Warners' *A Slight Case of Murder*.

"Fred Astaire may play Nijinsky . . ."

● France

First try of the French Government to give its motion picture industry a helping hand has not met with the success that was forecasted when the scheme was brought before the public way back in February.

Idea was that Jean Renoir should film *La Marseillaise*, retracing the French Revolution and showing that the Frenchman was master of his own country, and that the picture, under the patronage of the Government, should be financed by public subscription. A million and a half two-franc shares were issued, and everyone who bought a share was entitled to a reduction on admission to see the film. Practically every known writer, musician, actor and actress in the entire country was to contribute.

In practice, things worked out a little differently. Production under Renoir, as originally planned, was begun, but the whole story was changed and a great deal of the large scale grandioseness omitted. Reason given was that the picture would have been so long that it would have to be run serially. But the truth seems to be that the public subscription was not forthcoming.

Now we hear that a second "national film" is planned on the life of *Molière*.

* * *

La Grande Illusion, French film which received one of Italy's highest awards at Venice, has been banned by the Italian Government for release in the country.

For two years, *World Film News* has maintained the purpose for which it was founded: to encourage the creative, the genuine and the progressive in cinema and the allied arts. Because of its independence and outspokenness, it has secured widespread recognition and support and won for itself many loyal friends among producers, writers, critics, artists, technicians, and public men. Its views have been widely quoted in the daily and weekly press and its articles reprinted in film magazines, the world over.

Now its editors are planning an appeal to a still wider audience.

A Good New Year to our readers.

COCKALORUM

by Rodney Hobson

'FILM THE FLOWING BOWL'

The Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland are making a full investigation into the showing of talking films this week at three public-houses in the London area.

When their investigations are complete they intend to take action to try to prevent the spread of the tavern-talkies movement.

The secretary of the Association told me: "There are ways of stopping this sort of thing.

"It is not only for the protection of the film industry that we intend taking action. It is also to maintain the reputation possessed by the industry—that it is disassociated entirely from alcohol."

—News Item

"I say, Ernie, how about a quick one before the trade show?"

"Don't be a beast, Aubrey. You might think of the Industry sometimes, dash it."

"What industry?"

"The film industry. You know, what *we're* in."

"Oh, *that*."

"You know we always try to disassociate it entirely from alcohol. You never see people in films drinking, do you?"

"N-no."

"Well, then. And do you ever see *me* buying a round of drinks? I should say not!"

"I'm sorry, Ernie. It was rather rotten of me. Two grape-fruits, please, Miss. What do you mean—'You know we are' ?"

News from the East

The habit, prevalent among novelists, of following in the footsteps of Biblical characters, is said to be assuming alarming proportions. Mount Sinai seems to be suffering most from the visitation, and the scribes are still arriving. As a result, a certain amount of professional jealousy has been aroused, and there have been several nasty scenes.

"I say, old boy, I don't think you're quite playing the game. Will you please stop following me around."

"I'm not following you around. I'm following in the footsteps of Moses."

"Well, he went the other way. Just because you gave me quite a decent review on my last book, it doesn't mean to say that you can worry me like this."

"There's no need to talk like that. Anyway, whose footsteps are *you* following in?"

"Shan't tell you!"

"Oh, go on, don't be so *awful!*"

"All right then, I'll tell you if you promise to sit next to me at the next Literary Luncheon."

"I promise."

"I'm following in Aaron's footsteps."

"Do you mean the Aarons who does the book page for the *News-Telegram?*"

"No, the other one."

"I say, don't look now, but there's that chap Ralph who does all that libellous stuff for the weekly magazines. He looks as if he's dancing."

"So he is. He's following in Salome's footsteps."

"Certainly not, Erica, I'm going to the Odeon"

She's No Lady

Mr. Casper Burr, of Fairfield, Connecticut, owner of a radio and film-star goose which brings him in £50 a week, has—or had—a secret.

He discovered that Fanny—that's what he calls the bird—is not a goose at all; he's a gander.

Radio and film audiences in Connecticut know Fanny well. Mr. Burr has built the bird up into a female star. To change her name to Horace or Oswald would mean that she would have to start all over again. And the pay would not be £50 a week.

Fanny became famous when "she" developed a double chin, and with it an extra loud and sonorous honk. Now radio fans wait eagerly for Fanny's signature tune.—News Item.

Oh! Fanny, pride of Fairfield, Conn.,
Through all your life you might have gone
A goose, had not your worthy owner
Discovered he had made a boner
When he assumed your sex to be
What's known as "fair" (but not by me).
Come on now, Fanny, show a grin,
And take it on that double chin;
Give up your wily woman's arts,
They'll groom you now for gangster parts;
Forget you've been an *ingénue*,
In future, there's *man's* work to do.
No more will you be seen in bloomers,
Or figure in romantic rumours,
Which link your name in manner murky
With that of some depraved old turkey.
For now, forgetting you were goose,
You'll be allowed to wander loose,
And drink and gabble, swim and swear
With ganders whom you gave the air,
Before you coolly changed your sex,
(And thus reduced your weekly cheques).
And though your owner never knew,
I'm sure those ganders did—aren't you?

But then, with human stars as well,
It's sometimes *very* hard to tell.

CARGOES (*with a nautical roll in the direction of John Masefield*)

Stringy little spinster in provincial High Street,
Cycling from the library in the Market Square,
With a cargo of whimsy
By Beverly Nichols
And a book by some man called Havelock Ellis
which the library people
never
knew
was
there.

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE
WHY WE WANT 5,000,000
MORE READERS FOR *W.F.N.*

BOOBS IN THE WOOD

Our Christmas Pantomime, by Rodney Hobson

ACT ONE

(*The scene is an enchanted pine wood near Denham. A number of sets, originally built for Mr. Korda, have been done over to represent a sylvan glade. When the curtain rises two mortals are discovered wandering around the way mortals do.*)

1st Mortal: So this is the Enchanted Wood?

2nd Mortal: A pretty lousy neighbourhood.
But who is this old doll who marches
Upon the scene on fallen arches?

Fairy: I am the Spirit of the Screen,
That's why I look a bit obscene.
You're welcome to this bosky dell—
These wings are chafing me like hell.
(*There is a sound of maniacal laughter off.*)
That's just the Wicked Fairy Slump,
He's always hanging round this dump.
(*Song: "It looks Like Sleet in Dear Old Wardour Street"*).
Ah, foolish mortals, have no fear—
I'll show you what goes on round here.
(*She waves her wand and a Fairy Coach enters, pulled by a team of Sacred Cows and seventeen publicity men. The cows are the white ones.*)

Fairy: You asked for it, so here you are—
I give you—Fairy Movie Star!

2nd Fairy: *I'm* Fairy Movie Star,
Lissom and blond,
Spellbound you are
By my chromium wand.
From all you poor mortals
I manage to snatch
In the course of a year
Quite a nice bit of scratch.

1st Fairy: From the belfries of Fleet Street
I now call the bats.
Yes, these are the critics—
These gnomes in black hats.
(*Enter Critics.*)

Critics: Oh, we're tough, mighty tough in the Press,
Please excuse these champagne-stains upon our dress.
If you do us well at dinner
We will hail it as a winner,
Yes, we're tough, mighty tough in the Press.

1st *Mortal:* See how they herd round Fairy Star—

2nd Mortal: Herd but not seen, ha! ha! ha! ha!

1st Fairy: But, hist! who comes upon the scene?
Hey, limelight-man! Turn on the green!

(*Enter trio of directors.*)

Directors: We are three Movie Directors—
Ach himmel!
And how!
Mais oui!
Of course, our permits protect us,
Mais vraiment!
That goes
For me!
I'm Pierre from Paris, ziss England's a rum place,
I'm Hank, I'm a Yank and I think it's a bum place,
I'm Herman the German—I had to come *some* place!
Ach himmel!
You said it!
Mais oui!

(*Song: "This Year's Crop of Hisses."*)

1st Fairy: Why look—here comes Sourpuss-in-Boots!

1st Mortal: Good evening, Pussy.

2nd Mortal: Howya, toots?

Sourpuss: I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man,
I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man,
If anyone tries it,
I quickly excise it,
I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man.
(*Song: "Where the Blue of the Pencil Meets the Gold of the Script."*)

1st Mortal: Now who are these sad-looking stiffs!

2nd Mortal: They look like big executiffs.

(*Enter chorus of Bankers.*)

Bankers: We are the Bankers who put up the dough,
Put up the dough, put up the dough.
Where it gets put after that, we don't know,
But we've got a shrewd suspicion.

1st Fairy: Now, foolish mortals, have no fear—

1st Mortal: You've said that once before, my dear.

1st Fairy: —just come along and follow me
To our big finale—"All at Sea."

ACT TWO

(*The scene, for no reason at all, is the bottom of the sea. A number of sharks, whom you all know by name, are circling hungrily around a sunken vessel. This is symbolical of something, but we leave you to guess what.*)

1st Mortal: Well, here we are at the Sunken Vessel.

2nd Mortal: Don't keep saying what I say, Cecil.

1st Mortal: Say, who are all these fishy folk?

1st Fairy: Perhaps you'd like to meet them? Oke.

Voices: We are the Limpets,
We're ever so glad
To cling to the company
Governed by Dad.

I'm the Hollywood Octopus,
Seeking so slyly
To grasp in my tentacles
Stars you rate highly.

We are the Starfish
And what we like most
Is receiving an offer
To work on the Coast.

We are the Sharks
And we rig the finances.
One day we'll catch
Such a kick in the pances.

We are the Codfish
(The public, you follow?)
There isn't much screen stuff
That *we* will not swallow.

1st Fairy: And now to bed, turn down the lights,
Good luck to all—there go my tights.

(*Final Tableau depicting the Death of Nelson, featuring Ernie Fredman, Robert Taylor, Jeffrey Bernerd as the Spirit of Slum-Clearance; Godfrey Winn as the Spirit of Godfrey Winn, Trevor Wignall and the Ovaltineys. Adagio dances by Alfred Hitchcock and C. Lejeune. Closing chorus by the entire Industry: "Nobody's Sweetheart Now."*)

Curtain

THE GENTLE ART OF 'FIDDLING'

by

Edward Carrick

I WONDER if the legislators and financial experts who are working on the new Films Bill, which may mean life or death to the industry and its thousands of British workers, have ever bothered to inquire how the industry is worked behind the scenes at the production heads and distribution centres? That the Government seems determined to do its best to help the British film industry is presumably because the film industry seems to be suffering from some ailment. An inquiry I think would prove that the chief cause of the ailment is *graft*—or what we in the business call "fiddling"—and like another ailment called appendicitis needs immediate operation to save the patient.

I know little about high finance and not much about legislation, but after studying the production side of the film business for the last ten years, I know that whatever form Governmental support may take the multitude of energetic fiddlers who crowd the industry in all its branches are only waiting to take advantage of yet another opportunity for exploitation, so that the film business will read as a "crisis" headline time and time again, until they are eventually exposed.

In 1932 was published the report of an inquiry undertaken by the Commission on Education and Cultural Films. It was composed by Mr. A. C. Cameron and entitled "The Film in National Life". But now a new kind of report is needed, a report made from inquiries *behind the scenes* to show where the money goes once it has been handed over by the rich individuals, the financial organisations and the general public. These three interested groups might even like to find out why there have been little or no dividends on ordinary shares forthcoming from most production companies for so many years, even during what was called the boom period, 1936. Shortly after the prominence given in the press some time back to the financial complications affecting certain studios, we heard that Mr. Crocker of Fire Insurance fame was "on the job" as they say in detective stories, and I, for one, thought that at last there would be a general show up, but so far this has not been the case.

This fiddling is not organized. It works like a species of dry-rot at hundreds of different points right through the industry, fiddling being nothing but a "readjustment of the truth" whether with regard to numbers or facts; it is very difficult to locate, and the speed at which things move at a studio or in a distribution office makes it almost impossible to notice the readjustment unless one is on the look-out. Ask any sincere workers in any section of the industry and they will tell you stories of graft and ignorant waste that will amaze you.

Here are a few instances from which you can judge for yourselves and then try to concoct a Bill that will help the British film industry without increasing the racketeering.

A company working in a very small studio who didn't like being robbed asked their art director to look into their expenses sheets for materials used for production, and to see if prices could not be cut down. While he was working on these costs one night, the gentleman already in charge of the purchase of all materials entered his office in a most melodramatic fashion, and rather gave the game away by saying: "Look here, this place is not big enough for the two of us, so you had better get out before you get into trouble." Actually, I believe, the art director stayed and the other went, as he was able to prove that fiddling was losing the company a sum to the tune of thirty to fifty pounds a week on such items as timber, ironmongery and paints alone.

Here is another tune that a fiddler played. A production company wanted to produce a film. A distribution agent was found to guarantee 60 per cent of the costs up to a certain sum provided they agreed to the story and contracts. The production company then made contracts with all the expensive members of their staff as follows: Your salary, let us say, was £100 a week, but they gave you a contract that said you would get £300 a week. You were then asked to be a good chap and drop them a "private" letter to say you had thought things over and would take £100 in salary and the rest in shares to be payable when all expenses had been paid to production and renting companies. The production company then submitted these fiddled contracts and got its 60 per cent "costs" upon them.

A studio that was letting space to a production company gave their purchasing agent the following instructions: "We need £1,000, so you had better fiddle that in the costs of the producing company who are renting our floor space". And it was duly done. How wasn't it found out? Because the production manager knew nothing about production costs, except actors' salaries on which his time was taken up adjusting contracts to suit income tax returns. The art director having trained as an architect saw the leakage and pointed it out to his directors who took it up with the directors of the studios, and they just got out of it by replying: "These artistic fellows don't know anything about costs". On most productions there is no such person as a quantity surveyor or a clerk of works, so that no proper check can be kept on material used on production. The introduction of

Fiddling is none other than our old friend graft. Edward Carrick, who has worked as a set designer on many British productions, gives some revealing examples of fiddling and urges an enquiry "to expose the racketeering and inefficiency, which have been the chief causes of the present breakdown."

honest men to this side of the business would save in some studios as much as 25 per cent and in others 50 per cent of the building costs which sometimes absorbs as much as 10 per cent or more of the whole production costs.

There was another studio where things had been so arranged that the vast supply of timber that arrived daily was not checked "in order to save time and the salary of a man to check it", with the consequence that the companies supplying it made vast sums and the fiddler at the studios "bought" a new car, and later a new house. Of course there is always such a rush during production that these little things cannot be looked into.

There is another amusing story of a man who worked for production company A that used the studios of company B. Company B fiddled the accounts to the extent of some thousands of pounds. The man who worked for A tripped them up and wouldn't pay. Then he was bought over by Company B to prove that Company A was in the wrong, which was easy as he was in possession of all the evidence. So you see from these instances that whatever sum is decided upon as a standard of quality it means that disgraceful advantage may be taken of the Government's aid.

Why do the public laugh or sigh when they see the words British Films? Because, except for a few instances, they are badly conceived and produced from beginning to end. There are only a few artists, technicians and organisers in the business who really know their job; i.e. the art of making a film, large or small, of artistic merit at a reasonable cost, and in an organised businesslike way. These men are so few and so scattered that they are generally swamped by the multitude of unskilled and often totally useless personnel that make up the rank and file of the whole industry; some of them enthusiastic to learn, but with no method of doing so, others placed in jobs they know nothing about by influential people who know still less. The introduction of foreign artists and technicians to make up for our deficiency of knowledge has proved a failure. The foreigner arrives with no intention of teaching us or giving away his tricks during his three months stay, added to which the rush during production makes it impossible to learn anything. There is always a rush in British film studios. There are unending stories of stars being booked before the script is ready, of vast sets being raced ahead for a certain date and then being dismantled because someone had forgotten to mention that one of the chief actors in that set was still on the Continent, of crowds consisting of hundreds of extras being transported to a location without engaging a cameraman to take the shots, and so forth and so on. These blunders made by incompetents in command and the fact that at all unexpected points fiddling is being organised by unscrupulous people in positions they have no right to hold and of whose fiddling I have already given some idea, is the reason why films generally come out costing twenty-five to fifty per cent more than they should and are artistic and commercial failures resulting in financial loss to all except those who have fiddled profits en route.

THE crying need in this country at the moment if the film industry is to be an industry at all and to proft by the work the Government is trying to do to favour its progress, is the immediate institution of a board of inquiry to look into the methods used in every department of the trade, and eventually expose the racketeering and inefficiency which have been the chief causes of the present breakdown. At the same time we must establish an instructional centre, or school, of cinematography which does not only teach the mechanical side, but includes production, economics, direction and the whole art of making pictures. Here, all those already in the business will be able to come and learn their jobs for the first time in their lives. Such a centre could be formed at once round the few efficient technicians, artists, organisers and psychologists who have proved their capabilities and who are at present lost in the multitude of incompetents. To such a centre we should then have good reason to invite foreigners, for they could really come to teach, there would really be time and opportunity to learn from them and nobody would be thrown out of work thereby. This is the only film producing country of importance that has no instructional or experimental centre and our film industry is probably the only industry in the country that cannot be studied at an institute, school or centre, in many cases established specifically for that purpose.

Without this centre we shall be forced to continue to bow to the dictates of the "superior knowledge" of the old stagers who "do as was done before" and who have a warped preconception of "what the public wants" based on unknown statistics handed down from no one knows where.

Gibson Harris

PASSING IT ON

SHORT SHOTS

More Niterie Notings . . .
El Gaucho—on old Cosmo premises—grabbing all the studio stay-ups . . . "South American Joe" singing swing song about "Pink Elephants on the Ceiling" and Les Girls . . .Well . . . we won't mention names, but that director will have to change his next opus into a musical to fulfil **ALL those contracts** . . .

★

Cinematic Losses on night of Royal Command developing into a big scare . . . expected to boost cine-variety in effort to lure stayins out to pay . . .

★

Redundancy Roundelay . . . Deutschland uber Alles.

★

Head Line Dept. . . . .

Shirley Temple in "A" pictures . . .
We hope that, in Hollywood they spare her Rushes . . .

★

Bishop on afternoon theatre nudes . . .
Strip Teas . . .

★

Cause or effect? Ripley (Believe It or Not) states that Lawrence Tibbet repeats the words **"Blah" "Blah"** again and again in order to relax the muscles of his throat . . . So that's how those Publicists (and one in particular) manage to swallow their own stories . . .

★

There seems to be a Dispute in
Every Aspect on Rasputin.
Any further Mitigation
By way of Litigation
Will make him Virginal and
Blushin'
As a White Russian.

If this type of thing amuses you see Gibson Harris' pages in CINEMA MANAGEMENT. Specimen copy 7½*d*. post free :—

6 Tower Hill, London, E.C.3

"Eastern Valley"

Directed by DONALD ALEXANDER

★

This Film was shown to Their Majesties The King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. It describes a group subsistence scheme in a Welsh valley.

★

Made with that polished technique and forceful brevity which we have learnt to expect from English documentary directors. *"The Times."*

"STRAND" means Quality

★

Managing Director
DONALD TAYLOR

★

STRAND FILM COMPANY LTD., 37/39 OXFORD STREET, W.1

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"That alert and enlightened Journal."—*Cinema.*

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THEATRE

ROBERT'S WIFE

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE'S new play *Robert's Wife* at the Globe, deals with the complexities of individual lives. Robert (Owen Nares) is a vicar, while his wife Sanchia (Edith Evans) is the chief of a birth control clinic. Despite this unconventional blend of jobs, their different ways of looking at life do not interfere with their happiness. Both are idealists, but while Robert is concerned exclusively with the soul, Sanchia believes that if men look after bodies, their souls will look after themselves.

This difference in outlook is expressed in a concrete case: Dick Jones, a boy in the parish, has got a girl into trouble. The method by which Robert and his bishop seek to put the matter right is by joining the couple in lawful wedlock. When Dick's mother points out that the girl is a flighty fool, they hold out the hope that the child will be a link between the couple and that Mrs. Jones will herself come to love it. The two marry, and the child dies. Dick is tied to a worthless woman with nothing to give value to the union. As Robert comments, the clergy are too apt to make marriages and to think their responsibility ends there. Sanchia, on the other hand, in her concern with the health of man's physical life, considers it important that their lives are not made unhappy by the advent of children they do not want.

The main theme of the play, however, deals with the consequences of conflict between the formerly independent careers. Robert has an excellent chance of being appointed dean, but the prospect of promotion is made remote first by Sanchia's job, at which worthy and influential people look askance, and then by the pacifist activities of his son who is imprisoned for exhorting soldiers not to kill. Here again, in the arguments which the bishop brings against the pacifist, Mr. Ervine is not quite impartial. Moses, for example, did not command men not to kill because the Jews were a satisfied imperialist nation with nothing further to gain from killing. This commandment was part of a civil code.

When confronted by the fact that her career may injure her husband's, Sanchia at first believes that, since her work is important, it must nevertheless go on. But Mr. Ervine cleverly robs her of this argument and at the same time gives the play a happy ending by causing Miss Orley, who loves Robert from afar, to give the five thousand pound donation which will enable the clinic to continue. There are people as capable of managing the work as Sanchia is. She is therefore forced to recognise that it is not the desire for the survival of her work that keeps her at the clinic, but her love for the work. She is faced with the choice of whether she will continue with her work at the expense of her husband's career or sacrifice herself for his sake. The issue is now shifted on to a personal basis, to that of love between husband and wife, of whether it is the man or the woman who must sacrifice their life for the other. When it comes to the point, says Sanchia, it is the woman who always sacrifices because she is usually capable of more love, and she herself does so. A play of contemporary interest.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL (Queen's)

The opening scene sets the tone of this production. The heavy plush curtain rises from the box footlights to reveal the transformation of Mrs. Sneerwell from the deplorable sight she is on waking to the raddled, powdered and elaborately dressed grande dame she is in public. Attending her is her bedraggled slut of a maid. Thus is set the fantastic contrast between the surface glitter and basic ugliness, the white ruffle and the dirty neck, which was typical of the times. What a lovely satire this play is, with its exposition of the ethics of immorality and of the philosophy of decadence whereby, as Snake points out in the last act, the imputation of virtue becomes a slander!

With a first-rate cast headed by John Gielgud, production by Tyrone Guthrie, and sets and costumes by Motley, why is it that this version fails to ring the bell? There is a hint of sluggishness and stodginess, despite a gallant striving after the light, crisp touch which the play demands.

John Gielgud's Joseph Surface is a pointed, witty portrait of the precious hypocrite, and Miss Peggy Ashcroft's Lady Teazle is a perfect and delicious piece of work, every gesture exquisitely right. She is as much at home in Sheridan as in Chekov (we shall soon see *The Three Sisters*) and Shakespeare—that cannot be said of many actresses. Good, too, was Mr. Leon Quartermaine's benign and not too senile Sir Peter, and the exotic viciousness of George Howe and Glen Byam Shaw as Crabtree and Backbite.

GIVE ME GARBO

It was surprising to find that *Queen Christina* by August Strindberg, as presented by the Stage Society at the Westminster, cast no more light on the essential character than the film had done. One's first supposition was that this play is merely Strindberg when his mind was more on chemical experiments than on playwriting. After a promising opening when the characters enter in a fateful procession, as though a scroll of history were being unfolded before our eyes, the play degenerates into a series of skirmishes between Christina and her lovers together with some abstruse and obscure religious discussion. There were some episodes which gripped as Strindberg does at his best. But the manner of production did not indicate that the play was anything more important than the sort of romantic costume drama which might have been written by Mr. Noel Coward. Only after listening to Mr. Graham Rawson, the able translator, at the Stage Society discussion, did one realise that this is as highly concentrated a play as *The Road to Damascus* in which every line is cryptic and significant and that *Queen Christina* accordingly needed a more pointed, deliberate and emphatic production. If we had received such a production, we might have seen more in Christina than a tomboy in jackboots. It was a pity, for the Stage Society has done good work. They will probably be more successful with their next play which is Clifford Odets's *Awake and Sing*.

THE TROJAN WOMEN

Well produced at the Adelphi for a single performance under the auspices of the League of Nations Union, this production is notable for the magnificent verse into which Professor Gilbert Murray has translated Euripides original and for Miss Sybil Thorndike's clear, strong, untiring intensity as Hecuba. The Chorus was gawky, although the speech of Miss Margaret Leona and Miss Jean Shepheard had clarity and feeling. Miss Margaret Rawlings gave intelligence and life to Helen. Despite a costume which made him look like the Widow Twankey for the *Aladdin* forthcoming at this theatre, Mr. William Devlin's Agamemnon was a convincing, haughty and martial figure, and his verbal duels with Hecuba symbolised the conflict of the Spenglerian and Christian philosophies.

With China and Spain in mind, the indignation against Agamemnon's destruction of women, children and civilisation has a strong relevance to our own times. But one gets tired of indignation which is righteous but impotent. Knowing well how evil war is, we are helplessly making for the precipice and such warnings only irritate us in our seeming incapacity to avert the bloody end.

HENRY ADLER

MACBETH

IT is difficult to subscribe to a production of *Macbeth* which treats it as a Tod Slaughter melodrama and ignores the vitality of its poetry (one or two cuts were unforgivable) and the important implications of its psychology. One may also enquire, with some pertinence, whether it is necessary to put the witches into comic masks, and give them dolls to drop into the cauldron—anything less like a "birth-strangled babe, ditch delivered by a drab" could hardly be imagined, and was duly received with joyous laughter by the Vic audience. And why should death transform Banquo into a figure from a Nice carnival? And, largest question mark of all, why should the last act, and in particular the battle scenes, be so slipshod that the whole finale of the tragedy becomes low comedy?

After his excellent reading of *Hamlet* one had expected a subtler performance from Laurence Olivier in the name-part; the tendency to rant his way through at all costs was really disappointing in so intelligent an actor, and he was not helped by his make-up, which was in some macabre way vaguely reminiscent of Tom Walls. Miss Judith Anderson gave such a good performance in the sleepwalking scene that one hardly recognised her as the same woman who overstressed the voice and villainy of her part in the earlier acts.

On the credit side come Shakespeare, whose play is good enough to cover up even M. Saint Denis's misunderstanding of the Elizabethan character; the scenery and dresses by Motley, which fitted admirably the tragic mood of the play; and the retention of the Porter's dialogue with Macduff, too often and too arbitrarily cut.

But, on the whole, it is an object lesson in how not to produce *Macbeth*.

BASIL WRIGHT

LETTERS

NO PAY—NO SLEEP

In the advertisement referred to below, by the Cine-Technicians, Mr. Gordon Hales intimated his desire to work in the film industry. Mr. Hales, being young and from Ipswich, inspired by the thought of those Bohemian sufferings, supposedly attendant upon the making of great art, offered to work all day and all night, without sleep or food. It is evident that he is no materialist and is moved by the highest motives. He is in fact the right sort of young man for British producers to apprentice though they would be wise to preserve him from himself.

The letter from the Association of Cine-Technicians points out the wider danger. Without realising it, Mr. Hales, and all the young men who are prepared to work without sleep or food, or hours or pay, are doing an injury to organised labour. Artists they may be in spirit, but they may easily become blacklegs, in fact. We apologise for lack of vigilance in letting the advertisement slip through. If at times we emphasise work a little, this is not to say that we are not for wages and sleep.

Editor, W.F.N.

Our first impression on reading Mr. Gordon Hales' advertisement in your December issue was that it had accidentally strayed from the "Cockalorum" page. Apparently this is not so, and Mr. Hales does genuinely wish to become a sort of modern super slave to one of the Moguls in the film industry.

Mr. Hales is willing to "work for any wage, however small, all hours, anywhere." To these inducements he adds that he is "capable of working for exceptionally long hours without sleep or food." He adds that he is extremely intelligent. Doubtless there are employers whose conception of Utopia would be a staff consisting entirely of people like Mr. Hales, but the majority of workers and technicians in the film industry have other ideas.

At the present time no less than 35 per cent of members of the Association of Cine-Technicians are unemployed, with extremely meagre prospects of any immediate re-employment. (Many of them are compelled to utilise whatever gifts they may possess of going without food for exceptionally long periods.) We are very conscious of the fact that with such a large volume of unemployment there is every encouragement for employers to seek to reduce the standards of those still working, and a great proportion of A.C.T.'s activities have been and are devoted to protecting existing wages and conditions and negotiating for agreements embodying improvements.

With all respect to Mr. Hales's desire to enter the film business, surely he can realise that his methods are harmful to every single technician at present employed—and in the long run harmful to his own interests? Collective agreements embodying basic minimum salaries, hours of work and overtime payments, are the rule in every other industry. Why should the film industry be an exception? If Mr. Hales wanted to be an engine driver, would he advertise that he was willing to drive a train twenty-four hours a day, without food or sleep, and for no wages? One could imagine what would happen if he did.

The negotiation of collective agreements between employers and the Unions in the film industry is an urgent necessity. So also is the inauguration of an apprenticeship scheme, for which A.C.T. is pressing. Such a scheme would not only ensure reasonable wages and conditions to the apprentices, but would check the haphazard flow of people into the industry, generally of youngsters with few qualifications other than enthusiasm and unreasoning loyalty, who can be exploited to the detriment of those whose very livelihood depends on the industry.

We trust that Mr. Hales will realise that he is doing a great disservice both to himself and to those many hundreds of technicians who will, perhaps, one day be his colleagues.

REG. BARTLETT,
For the General Council of the Association of Cine-Technicians.

W.F.N.'s STARRING SYSTEM

As an enthusiastic admirer and supporter of *W.F.N.*, I claim the right to be a little puzzled at your monthly starring of films. The December issue, for instance gives no stars for *Land Without, Bread* and *Un Carnet de Bal* and one star each for *Angel* and *Spanish Earth*. Elsewhere in the same issue Basil Wright describes *Spanish Earth* as "a great film", yet it ranks as only deserving the same rating as *Angel*. Why? *The Last Night* also has to go out into the world without a single *W.F.N.* star. Is it so much worse than *The Prisoner of Zenda* which gets one star?

One other example. In October *The Edge of the World* is described as "as near as anything a masterpiece", yet rates only one star against two for *A Star is Born*. Maybe you felt the latter film started out with an initial advantage and deserved another one, or is there some other reason? It's all rather mystifying.

RALPH BOND

As all good critics should, Mr. Bond has obviously worked out his own clear-cut starring system. Ours is different, and works as follows. Three stars for a film that for weight of theme or other outstanding originality is important to the progress of the cinema, and will stay in the memory, e.g., "Zola," "They Won't Forget." Two stars for a film that, while less weighty, has some specatacular quality of brilliance about it—in technique, acting, story or wit, e.g., "A Star is Born" or "Easy Living." One star for the film which, though it has weaknesses, represents some special effort of sincerity or ability. Thus, while three stars becomes a guide to first-rate technique and first-rate subject matter, two stars is a guide to skill rather than weight. A one star film may, paradoxically, have a better intrinsic idea than a two star film, but it will not, on our judgment, have been so good a job of movie-making.

On this measuring rule, "World Film News" disagrees frequently with its contributors. Where it often deviates is where personal political interests have coloured a contributor's judgment. We attempt to keep a long term point of view and do not engage ourselves too closely in political excitements.

Editor, W.F.N.

SUGGESTION FOR EPIC

Mr. Elton has suggested there are epic stories for our films tucked away in the industrial exploits of men like Watt and Stephenson. But how many there are—and not only in industry. Just before reading his article I read this letter in the *Sunday Times* on the subject of Sir Ronald Ross and signed by Lilias Rider Haggard. It is difficult to think there are studios who would know how to dramatise the momentous discovery of malarial cells in the stomach of the Anopheles mosquito, but the record of it appears to have a genuine epic note.

"I have been fortunate in hearing Sir Ronald Ross tell the story. How exhausted, his eyesight affected, impeded in his vital researches by every obstacle known to senior officials, he came at the end of a long, hot day to the dissection of the last mosquito of a batch on which he had built high hopes, and which so far had been a complete failure. Another half-hour's labour for at least the thousandth time—he was very tired and what was the use?

"Then, in his own words, 'the Angel of Fate fortunately laid his hand on my head.' That last mosquito held the ultimate clue—the secret which has saved thousand upon thousand of lives, and in the first flush of that triumphant knowledge he wrote these lines:—

This day relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing; and God
Be praised. At his command,

Seeking his secret deeds
With tears and toiling breath
I find thy cunning seeds
O million murdering Death.

I know this little thing
A myriad men will save,
O Death where is thy sting?
Thy victory, O Grave?"

J. A.

BRITISH FILMS, 1915

I recently found among some old papers a copy of the *Daily Graphic* of February 11th, 1915, which contained the following prophetic film review:—

"ALBERT CHEVALIER ON THE FILM."

"In the delightful photoplay production of *The Middleman* by the London Film Company, given for the first time at the Shaftesbury Pavilion yesterday, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has every reason to thank the producer for a series of extremely vivid and dramatic pictures. . . . A powerful, carefully studied artistic triumph . . . well supported by a clever company. With such sound literary and photographic combinations as these, British producers need have little fear of foreign competition."

Korda and Quota may have been in their cradles—or even not so far—but—*plus ça change*. . . .

BASIL WRIGHT

NEWSREEL RUSHES

LAST YEAR'S SCOOP may be THIS YEAR'S CURSE

"AN INCIDENT"

From the newsreel viewpoint, Armistice Day 1937 had all the usual ingredients of spectacle and universal interest, plus just the little extra something to send its box-office appeal sky-rocketing: AN INCIDENT. Newsreel pictures of the madman's dash and immediate disappearance under a pile of police, varied from a semi-close-up in National News (see below), to an extreme long-shot from a nearby roof-top in Pathé, and shots of the man being dragged away in G.B. and Movietone. Only reel not to include a picture of the incident was Paramount, whose commentator covered the omission by saying: "British Paramount News was far too loyal to break the silence by switching on its cameras!" Little did that commentator realise that his remark would start a train of rumour that has been buzzing through newsreel offices ever since. For perhaps without thinking, in filming the incident, they had in fact bitten their thumbs at a strict government official order.

OFFICIAL PUNISHMENT ?

Almost all newsreel shots of the Cenotaph ceremony have to be taken from positions in Whitehall, or from the windows or roofs of Government buildings. Weeks beforehand, newsreels must apply for official permits from the Commissioner of Police and the Office of Works. Such permits state clearly that permission to film the service is granted on the express condition that no cameras, sound recorders, or other gear be switched on during the silence, for even the slightest motor purr would be clearly heard by nearby crowds. Unofficially it has long been known that cameramen almost invariably break the silence rule; else they would never have been able to get the annual impressive shots of Whitehall solid with bared heads. But never until now has the Government and police had such incontrovertible proof that the silence had been broken. Hence the question that was being muttered behind newsreel windows: would authority take any action by way of punishment? General opinion seems to be that there will be no immediate kick-back, but when next Armistice comes round, and reel bosses apply for permits as usual, it may be that Paramount will find itself in the happy position of being the only reel with permission to shoot in Whitehall. Then other reels will have to work from Paramount material, or put up with distant shots taken through giant lenses. If that happens, they will realise that this year's scoop can sometimes become next year's curse.

NATIONAL TRAGEDY . . . LAST ACT

In the up and down world of newsgathering and reporting, each week brings many a sad story. But seldom can there have been such an atmosphere of unrelieved melancholy as that which has surrounded the coming and going of the new newsreel, NATIONAL NEWS. As 1937 drew to a close, the final curtain fell on a tragedy in three acts.

ACT ONE

The curtain went up last summer with the announcement that longtime Universal Editor Cecil Snape had switched from the reel he had produced for thirteen years, moved under the banner of Chairman Norman Loudon of Sound City Studios (*W.F.N.*, Oct.) A well-handled publicity build-up was climaxed by the first issue of National News in October. Critics set up such a howl about its lack of news and entertainment value, that it was withdrawn from circulation within 48 hours (*W.F.N.*, Nov.) Act One closed with purple lights and a funeral march.

ACT TWO

Next scene came in November, with the issue of an "experimental" Armistice edition. It included the best picture of any reel of the "madman incident" (see above). But managers who were expected to sign contracts, and particularly Oscar Deutch, whose Odeons were rumoured to be the hidden treasure which National News was trying to pick up, were not impressed. Again production was suddenly stopped. Curtain on Act Two, with a blackout and a death scream.

FINALE

Act Three was hardly more than an epilogue. On a foggy Monday afternoon a few days later, Cecil Snape called his staff into the recording theatre, broke the news that by the end of the week he and they would be "out". National News might try again in the New Year, but he could make no promises. Those who had left good jobs with other reels, including Snape himself, found there was no going back. All the picture, sound, and re-recording gear were just so much weight in Norman Loudon's pocket.

MAXWELL AGAIN

Last year canny Scot John Maxwell, boss of Associated British Picture Corp., startled the film world by trying to wrest control of Gaumont-British from the Ostrers. Had the Scot succeeded, he might have seen fit to combine the G.B. and Pathé newsreels into one giant with the world's largest circulation. As things turned out, both G.B. and Pathé continued, backed by Britain's two largest cinema chains, as the deadliest of rivals. Fairly accurate though unofficial circulation reports placed G.B. slightly ahead; though even G.B. remained just behind Universal —holding the newsreel top circulation score. Now, with the news that Maxwell has gained control of the Union Cinemas chain, and pushed it into his A.B.C. circuit, comes a complete swing round in the newsreel circulation race.

PATHÉ TO THE TOP

For some inexplicable reason, Union Cinemas refuse to disclose how many movie houses are involved in the Maxwell deal; but reliable estimates put the number at between 75 and 100. As fast as present newsreel contracts expire, each of those houses will replace its current reel (mostly G.B.) by Pathé Gazette. By the spring of 1938, Pathé's circulation will have been boosted to the biggest east of the Atlantic; Universal will become second; G.B. third by several lengths. If the latter should find that its profits are so far reduced, that it must cut its coat, set a lower standard from its present pinnacle, it would be a major newsreel tragedy.

The Commentator.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Film and School

By Helen Rand and Richard Lewis (D. Appleton-Century).

We are so accustomed nowadays to accepting films as the major visual aid that we tend to forget some of the other media for enlivening the curriculum. This book is a pertinent reminder of these other ways. The authors discuss the place of the school journey, the museum visit, the film, pictures and slides. They show their point of application and throw them against the general education theory thus putting some perspective round their applications. The authors are forced, like most of us, into giving the film a primary place, as it conveniently brings life, movement and action into the classroom. It organises the observation which is unorganised in the school journey or the museum visit.

The book is remarkably well documented and beautifully illustrated. Too often books on visual aids forget to use visual aids. But this is a grand exception. In lay-out and pictures it uses the imagination which alone can make visual aids of real value in the life of the school. Our educational publishers might with advantage give it considerable study.

The technique of picture making is outlined so that an intelligent discussion of the elements will follow. This is the grammar. Then comes appreciation. Films are to be seen and evaluated. Rating scales are outlined so that the children can keep their own records. The picture is first graded in comparison with others seen, and then analysed further by giving credits to the different influences which have gone to the final emphasis of the film. Here the knowledge of the process of picture making and the duties of the various functionaries is a useful criterion.

We doubt whether this kind of technique automatically indicates the best pictures but the scheme must certainly raise in youthful minds the question of why some pictures are as they are. This we take to be a step in the right direction and Miss Rand and Mr. Lewis are to be congratulated. On this side of the Atlantic this book will be most welcome, not as a technique but as an indication of the seriousness with which American educators are viewing the cinema, and the way they are facing up to a discussion of this major influence in young lives.

THOMAS BAIRD

The Film Game

By Low Warren (Werner Laurie, 10*s.* 6*d.*).

For those who have achieved eminence in the respectable professions the evening of life is a busy time. Personal reminiscences must be given to the world before death steps in. Battles must be re-fought, quarter-decks re-trodden, cases re-argued, treaties re-signed. It is an established thing and the second-hand bookshops could not flourish without it. But what is established in the *beau monde* has not necessarily percolated into the turbulent world of the movies. Retrospection in moviedom there has been in plenty, but mostly on the impersonal and learned planes of history and analysis. Movie autobiography is still rare. Perhaps this is because few movie people live long enough to write down their personal experiences; perhaps because those who do can think of more pleasurable ways of spending their hard-earned leisure.

But Mr. Low Warren is an unashamed autobiographer. He muses quietly on a life spent as a pioneer of the British cinema and in so doing he strikes a novel note in film literature. And it is the more surprising that after his hectic experiences as producer, executive, trade journalist and critic he should be able to write so calmly and with such intense good will. For if Flaherty's are the finest eyes in cinema, Mr. Warren's must surely be the benignest. He paints a trade peopled with jovial and upright gentlemen; an industry in which stars shifted sets for the love of their medium, in which world-famous novelists of the '90's sweated their guts to assure the future of a new art. He describes a community in which everyone worked happily together, films made money, and the censor was a splendid fellow.

Wardour Street in those early days must indeed have been a Utopia. There was no blind booking, no redundancy, no patents racket, no inhibitions about production, no libel actions afterwards, no uneasy underwriters, no American market, no television on the horizon. Shareholders were orderly. The Board of Trade was unnecessary. The British film industry was run by British people.

And maybe the pioneers were right. Maybe, if the film industry had continued to evolve from music hall and cockney comedy and the traditional story-stuff of our race these latter-day plagues might never have been visited upon it. And if British audiences had preserved the right of munching peanuts and remaining covered in the ninepennies maybe the pretentious elegancies of our imported directors would be razzed good and proper at source instead of being politely endured.

STUART LEGG

Jean Harlow

By Dentner Davies (Constable. 3*s.* 6*d.*).

This book is a journalistic account of the life and work of Jean Harlow. It contains an impressive assembly of information most of which should interest Harlow devotees. It goes into very great detail and spins out to a fair length with summaries even of the plots of each of her films. The book makes no attempt at profundity and not a great attempt at characterisation. Miss Harlow remains an enigma. There is, however, plenty of material over which the fan may brood. Mr. Dentner Davies is to be congratulated on a respectful and conscientious job.

M. FRASER

Off to the Pictures

Written and illustrated by Frank Reynolds (Collins, 7*s.* 6*d.*).

Mr. Frank Reynolds, the well-known *Punch* artist, has written an amusing account of his reactions to the films, with pertinent remarks on cinema attendants, the actors, the munching, lurching, chattering audience, interspersed with anecdotes on Fleet Street, the local plumber, dogs, gardening and village cricket. G.F.

John Gielgud's Hamlet

By Rosamond Gilder (Methuen & Co., 5*s.*).

This is a scene-by-scene description of John Gielgud's playing of Hamlet, as recorded by Rosamond Gilder, the New York Critic. To Miss Gilder's record is added notes by John Gielgud himself on the production and costuming of the play and some comments on the "traditional stage business". No new light is thrown on the problems over which commentators have quarrelled for centuries, but the book provides quite a readable companion to the play.

John Gielgud's actual interpretation can perhaps be best contrasted with earlier interpretations by taking a contemporary description of Garrick playing the scene of Hamlet's first meeting with the Ghost, and Miss Gilder's account of the same scene in the Gielgud Hamlet.

Here is the description of Garrick's Hamlet meeting the Ghost:

> "Hamlet is looking away to the left when Horatio suddenly points to the right: 'Look, my lord, look, it comes!' And the Ghost is there motionless before the audience is aware of it. Then Garrick turns abruptly around and at the same time totters backward two or three steps, his knees knocking together beneath him, his hat falling on the ground, his arms . . . almost fully opened . . . he stands . . . as if turned to stone, held up by his friends . . . His face expresses such horror that shudder after shudder runs through one before he begins to speak . . ."

Here is the account of Gielgud's Hamlet in the same scene:

> "His first knowledge of the presence is from Horatio's warning words. The sudden interruption of Hamlet's caged pacing catches the breath. There is an instant of immobility . . . Then Hamlet turns slowly . . . His overwrought nerves for an instant betray him. He whirls away . . ."

There is more than a difference of interpretation here. In the one there is acted horror conveyed so effectively to the audience by stance, gesture and facial expression that "shudder after shudder" goes through the beholder. In the other, the most that the sympathetic anxious-to-be-affected onlooker can record is a catching of the breath. Miss Gilder is clearly uncomfortably aware at times of this great difference between the acting of the past and that of the present: she seeks to explain and excuse it by talking of Gielgud as representative of the "modern generation" and the "Freudian aspects of Hamlet's character."

It is this introspection and neurosia which marked the Hamlet of Gielgud—and explains, too, his success in the part of Richard II—which is the death of drama as a popular force.

No one will ever convince me that it was thus that Richard Burbage packed 'em into the Globe three hundred years ago. In fact tradition argues convincingly otherwise. There is no good drama and no good acting without the groundlings—who now go to the cinema—which may explain why Mr. Gielgud's Old Vic Hamlet of some years ago was a more vigorous performance than the one described in this book.

RICHARD CARR

BOOK REVIEWS

The African and the Cinema

By L. A. Notcutt and G. C. Latham (Edinburgh House Press, 3*s.* 6*d.*).

To those people who have considered at all the educational possibilities of the cinema it is obvious that no situation contains greater potential results than the instruction of the illiterate, the unalphabetic, the primitive. People who cannot read books, whose attention can be held with difficulty through a long lecture, can follow with ease and interest a talking film (for the superstition that some primitives cannot recognise photographs has never been substantiated by any satisfactory evidence). In theory the talking film has an inestimable value for education, for acculturation, for civilisation, in the extended meaning of the term; in practice the cinema in the tropical countries has either been completely neglected, or abandoned to commercial exploitation tempered by *ad hoc* censorship. For their courageous attempt to break new ground and to provide films primarily intended for the Bantu of East Africa, Major Notcutt and Mr. G. C. Latham deserve the highest praise, and the book in which they describe their experiment from several angles merits the study of all interested in educational and amateur films.

The genesis of the experiment is worth recording:—

> "In 1926 Major Notcutt was managing a group of sisal plantations in East Africa and, like many other planters, thought that an estate cinema might be an effective method to help to maintain a contented labour force. . . . Later, for amusement, he made two or three films with African subjects and actors, and was surprised to find how remarkably attractive those proved to the natives. It then occurred to him that there might be commercial possibilities in the establishment of native cinemas with films of their own. . . .
>
> "Subsequently generous grants were made by the Carnegie Corporation. . . . Financial assistance was also received from the Roan Antelope Copper Mines Ltd., Rhokana Corporation Ltd., and Mufulira Copper Mines Ltd. . . .
>
> "The project was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Social and Industrial Research (of the International Missionary Council) with the friendly assistance of the Colonial Office and the British Film Institute. The experiment was under the general direction of Mr. Merle Davis; Major Notcutt was appointed field director; and Mr. G. C. Latham, formerly Director of Native Education in Northern Rhodesia, accepted an invitation to become educational director."

I have thought it worth while to make this long quotation, for it illustrates a great number of the difficulties which to my mind vitiated much of this experiment and are likely to hamper many similar ones. There is the confusion, which runs throughout the whole book, between the aims of profit-making and education; there is the evident influence of missionaries and European commercial concerns (the objections to these influences are not necessary *per se*, but because they are inevitably external to the natives' cultural lives, and have aims different to those of their audience); there is the astounding naïvety of Major Notcutt in being surprised that natives liked films about themselves; and there is the almost complete neglect of the people for whom the films are meant to be made, except as potentially paying audiences and for performing minor technical jobs.

In two years the unit produced 35 films, consisting in all of 87 reels of 16 mm. film (200 ft. to the film); all except three of the films were accompanied by sound-on-disc; this old-fashioned method was essential because of the variety of languages in which the explanatory commentary had to be given. The films were made at remarkable speed and with extraordinary economy; only occasionally was a scene reshot, and the whole of the processing and editing was done on the spot. The authors say that the technical quality of the films left a great deal to be desired, and the reproduced stills bear out this statement.

Of the 35 films produced 19 were concerned with problems of agriculture, the care and improvement and marketing of land and crops and animal produce; 6 were concerned with questions of health; the remaining ten were a more miscellaneous group, varying between pure entertainment to narrative, and recruiting propaganda for workers in the Geita mine. For any one who does not know the district intimately criticism of the agricultural and health films would be impossible; from the accounts given the majority seem to be well devised and often well executed. It is the more general type of film which is susceptible to criticism, and which shows some highly criticisable features.

I have already mentioned the film which seems to me the most objectionable of the lot. The Geita mine itself may be admirably conducted, but it is notorious that a great number of mines in East Africa are not, and it seems to me a poor service to the African to lure him from his village to a mine-compound by showing the attractions of one well-run mine. The nervousness of administrators and the prudery of missionaries provide some amusing situations. In a film to advertise post office savings a scene was shown of a person burying his savings and being subsequently robbed: "some Europeans objected to the showing of the theft at all . . . they hold that no crime or violence of any kind should be shown." In another film the scenario called for the divorce of a man and his wife and the device was adopted of making the wife a Mahomedan and the hero unintentionally divorcing her owing to his ignorance of custom. "This . . . shows that when sex must be touched on in entertainment films there is no necessity whatever for anything in the least undesirable to be filmed." Unfortunately, when the film was shown outside the area where Mahomedans lived "the point about the divorce was not generally grasped." This same film, *Gumu* illustrated the sort of difficulties which are liable to face the maker of films for natives.

> "First objections were raised to it by the Indian community because it contained a scene in which an Indian trader charged a higher price for the same article to the yokels visiting the town than to a town native . . . . This scene was therefore cut. Secondly, it was objected to by some Europeans because when the two natives were seeking work they were shown interviewing a European who treated his labourers badly. . . . Thirdly the native commentator . . . imitated a European who, although able to make himself understood, did not possess much knowledge of the vernacular. This was objected to by some Europeans, who consider that the planter should have been shown in the best light. . . ."

Apart from the delicate sensibilities of everybody except the intended audience which have to be considered, the chief difficulty of making films for primitive audiences is the smallness of the group which possesses a common background of language, custom, and attitudes. Messrs. Notcutt and Latham are aware of the differences between the detribalised negroes in the towns and mining camps and those still living on their land, but I do not think they reckon sufficiently with the extremely varied cultures of primitive races before European intrusion has destroyed their lives. Unless films deal with subjects (such as European medicine or marketing) outside the traditional native life, a separate version has to be made for each cultural group, or the people and actions will appear foreign to all except the group employed in the making of the film. It is impossible to group Africans or Indians as one can group Europeans who share a common background and culture. For this reason I believe that the suggestion for a Central organisation in London to produce on an economic basis films for native instruction would meet with very great difficulties, especially if they continue the habit of Messrs. Notcutt and Latham of producing their scenarios in consultation with Europeans on the spot, but not with the natives themselves.

Apart from an account of the films made and their reception, the book contains the journal of an exhibition tour (of little interest to people who do not know well East Africa), elementary notes on the production of amateur films, with special attention to tropical conditions, and a theoretical summing up of the situation with regard to films for natives and various recommendations. The chief conclusions that I have reached after reading the book are (1) that it is impossible to make satisfactory films on a commercial profit-making basis for the moment, and that this should not be attempted; (2) that before more films are made it would be desirable to define the aims of the colonisation-education of which the films are a part (certain films showing over-prosperous natives were criticised as having "too much uplift"—really setting up too high a standard of living for the negro to aim at); and (3) that the co-operation of the intended audience should be sought at the beginning of the making of the film and not at the end. If it is desired to help the natives this cannot be done by despising them.

GEOFFREY GORER

URGES SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, deplored . . . that only 810 schools out of 32,000 in the British Isles had film projectors, against 17,000 in Germany, 10,097 in the U.S.A. and 9,400 in France.—"Motion Picture Herald."

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FAREWELL to a NEWS THEATRE

by Cyril Ray

GREAT fun sometimes, mind you. A good film on the screen, an intelligent notice in the press, a queue at the box-office and your friends cadging free seats. But that's only part of it. There are also the pages being late, the petty-cash book that won't balance, the broken carbon and the jammed tabs, the fourpence short in the stamp account. And silly questions from silly people. Not that some of the silly people aren't rather engaging—I liked the two women who complained that they'd sat in the theatre from half-past two to five o'clock and were still waiting for the big picture.

It's the major annoyances, though, that drive you out of your news theatre. You have to cope with the fact that the same people who congratulate you pompously one week on the "most enlightened theatre in England" (your pardon, Marquis) teeter about your newsreel the next. A pretty justifiable teeter, in all conscience, but they might, you feel, realise that there just aren't any newsreels that aren't lickspittle and worse and that it's very easy to cut that bore Belisha out of your reel but quite impossible to put in its place something that will please them—or yourself. Even if you had the money and the time and the energy and the ability and the directorial permission to go and make your own newsreels of things worth filming you'd find somebody who had a way of stopping you—or of taking your licence from you. The local police may be unable to prevent you doing this or that, but they could always find that you'd more celluloid stored in your projection room than the by-laws allowed or that your box hadn't the right sort of fastener on the door or that your fireman wasn't wearing his badge the right number of inches above his left nipple. I'm not, I hope, doing the police an injustice —I'm merely saying that that is what they could do, that they may be much too decent blokes to think of anything of the sort, but that you daren't, when it isn't your theatre, take the risk of finding out. Anyway, it isn't any use complaining about the newsreels. So long as they're made the way they are for the reasons they are they won't stand up to an honest advertising film—still less to Benchleys, Disneys and the English realists.

Not that these three are all your programmes consist of. There aren't enough adult shorts to go round, anyway, and when the realist people are so keen on preaching to the converted at non-commercial shows that an ordinary box-office theatre can't get a first run, they're even less. (My successor is still waiting for details of the commercial distribution of *Children at School* whilst any school can get a free showing for the asking and some already have.) So you have to fill up with fill-ups and you pluck a renter from the huddle on your doorstep and argue with him about what the fill-ups are going to be. He'll tell you about the entertainment value of the Absolutely-Awful and you'll plead (but not so much that he'll put the price up) for the Fairly-Presentable-if-you're-not-too-Fussy. And the renter polishes his diamond tie-pin and sucks his gold tooth and says, pathetic-like, "Who'm I going to sell the rubbish to if you only take the good 'uns?" and you don't know the answer to that except that if you insist you'll get damn-all. And you book some of the Fairly-Presentable and as few as you can get away with of the Absolutely-Awful. And there's more teetering. And even all that would be relatively tolerable if you and the renters and the public and the shareholders and your directors agreed about which was which. But only you know, and not everyone will listen to you, and two reels of Glorious Technicolor are booked for you as Absolutely-Stupendous and you haven't even the satisfaction of having everyone agree that they're nothing of the sort but only a Dire-Necessity-Because-the-Renter's-a-Friend-of-Somebody.

There's a tradition in the entertainment business that everyone must be pleased and no one offended. (Censors do pretty well out of this one.) Even theatres that can afford to put this blah into perspective or the dog-box still accept it as a way of life or a golden rule or something. And when, because producers and renters are what they are, your programmes are more patchy than any reasonable man can stomach, and you chuck in a few more assortments because there's a man round the corner whose tastes you'd forgotten to cater for, you end up as a theatre with a ragbag instead of a theatre with a policy. Which is all sorts of a pity because a policy is easier to manage, in any case.

Even the most leftward fringe of the exhibiting trade is still not the place for people who find it easier to say no than yes. Only on the hither side of the box-office can you wave the gaily-coloured banner of no-compromise with one hand and thumb your nose with the other.

PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

NEWS NOTES

G.-B.I. are now producing six films for the Religious Film Society. These films are being made in two separate lots—three having a purely religious theme, and three with stories of everyday life; the films are being made on these lines in order to discover which type of film will be most successful in presenting religion to the general public. While these films are intended primarily for showing by religious bodies, it is hoped they will also be successful when exhibited in theatres. *Where Love Is, As We Forgive* and *The Unseen Power* have already been completed. Two more, *What Men Live By*, directed by Vernon Sewell, and *A Modern Story*, directed by Donald Carter, are shortly going into production.

G.-B.I. are now installed in the Lime Grove Studios. In spite of the break caused by moving, activity continues. *The Chick*, a two-releer made by Percy Smith under Professor Julian Huxley's supervision, will be shown in the theatres next month. In the biological field, several films are in the course of production. *Paramecium* which has entailed four years' work is now completed. This film was held up for many months owing to scientific difficulties, and it was only a few weeks ago that its completion was made possible. A film on the embriology of the trout, and one on cray-fish, are both ready for showing. Another interesting production is *King Penguins in Captivity*, which has been made with the co-operation of the National Zoological Park of Scotland. Finally, the first batch of the Ecology series has been completed and has proved so successful that this series, started experimentally, will be continued in the 1938 schedule.

* * *

At the G.P.O. Film Unit, Harry Watt has almost finished shooting his ship-shore radio film. Up at Aberdeen last month, Watt was held up at first waiting for stormy weather.

At the beginning of December the Unit and the complete trawler crew started studio sequences at Blackheath on a rocker set representing the after-cabin of a trawler. The crew has now gone back to Aberdeen, and Watt is working on a set representing the interior of Wick Radio Station.

Another film by Watt, *Big Money*, is nearly finished. Patrick Jackson, who took over when Watt went to Aberdeen, has brought the film to the stage of final re-recording.

* * *

Nine films out of a year's production nearing the 80 mark provided only a very tentative cross-section of the work of Sound-Services-Publicity Films-Merton Park Studios when this group held its annual trade show at the Palace Theatre.

They comprised three half-reelers intended for paid showing in cinemas, four one-reelers intended for road-show programmes, one dealer instructional picture and a series of extracts from a Ford "feature" film.

Compression was the keynote of the cinema half-reelers. *Electricalities* crammed the entire manufacturing story of headlamps and batteries into five minutes.

The best work in this field was Dunlop's *Pioneers of Safety*, its high-spot being the sequence with John Tranum making a delayed parachute drop, with nothing on the sound track except the almost unbearable noise of the stop-watch ticking.

Other films included one made for the Bacon Marketing Board, and a new *Mr. Therm* film.

Cekalski and Wohl's "London through Polish eyes"

Wohl and Cekalski, producers of documentary films in Poland, are visiting England now. They have brought with them several of their recent productions including three studies set to the music of Chopin, which were shown at the Venice Festival this year.

Wohl and Cekalski are members of the Association of Short Film Producers in Poland, and it is through this organisation that all documentary shorts are distributed.

Two of their productions, *Danger* and the Chopin Film, were recently shown to the press, and were received with great interest.

* * *

The new film on *Scotland To-day*, to be produced by the Realist Film Unit, is a survey of every aspect of Scottish life with a special emphasis on the people, and will be directed by John Taylor. It is one of a series of films being made about Scottish life for presentation at the Glasgow Exhibition.

* * *

The Canadian Government have been shooting scenes for a film on apple-packing. They are for inclusion in a film to be completed in Canada and were supervised by Mr. W. B. Gornell, Fruit Trade Commissioner.

* * *

C. K. Sachi, the Indian Film Director, has recently returned to India where he will start production on five films dealing with different aspects of Indian life.

* * *

At present the Strand Film Co. have more than twenty-four subjects in various stages of production.

The Future's in the Air dealing with the Empire air routes, *Five Faces*, dramatising the historical and modern aspects of that little known corner of the Empire, Malay, and *Watch and Ward of the Air*, entailed a journey of 34,000 miles for a unit headed by Alexander Shaw, Ralph Keene and John Taylor.

Other films made on this expedition include *Dancing Islands*, a story of Bali, *Rosevale Ranch* which has an Australian setting, and *Air Outpost* which was produced on the Persian Gulf.

Other directors of the company have been working on a series of zoological films, *Animal Kingdom*, at Regent's Park and Whipsnade, under the supervision of Professor Julian Huxley. Six of the series of twelve have been completed and will be ready for release by Associated British Film Distributors early in the New Year.

The series will include such varied subjects as *Animal Geography*, directed by Ralph Bond, *Size and Weight*, directed by Donald Alexander, *Animals Looking at You*, directed by R. I. Grierson with Mabel Constanduros, *Wild Babies*, directed by Evelyn Spice, *Whipsnade Freedom*, directed by Paul Burnford, and *Monkey into Man*, directed by Stanley Hawes.

South Wales was the venue of another Strand director, Donald Alexander, who has produced *Eastern Valley*, a documentary dealing with the self-supporting industrial and agricultural centre which is run entirely by unemployed.

Yet another unit has completed *Strong to Save*, a documentary which is being dedicated to the Royal Lifeboat Institution. In Cornwall W. Pollard is making a film dealing with the local traditions, customs and industries, an experiment in dramatised travelogue.

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THE PROJECTION OF SCOTLAND

by John Grierson

SCOTLAND is organising the production of its propaganda films on a national scale and this is a great deal wiser than the piecemeal methods now pursued in England. The generous gift of £5,000 by Mr. J. A. MacTaggart has enabled the Secretary of State, Mr. Elliot, to start a fund; the British Council and Commissioner for the Special Areas in Scotland have added to it. It is expected that the various national industries will each, with its own sum for production, add to the list of films which from next year on, are to tell the story of Scotland.

We are supposed, in this country, to hold the secret of film propaganda. During the past year or two, several foreign governments have been examining the work of the documentary groups, analysing their methods of distribution, cross-examining the people responsible, on how films can be fitted to different national purposes. Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Denmark, Brazil, Portugal, Belgium, among others, have made special efforts to convey the British experience overseas. The latest and most interesting student is the United States, where Mr. Rotha is having a great success lecturing on the documentary method and showing the best examples of propaganda work. A flow of students, mostly from American Universities and Washington Departments, has come to London to examine the special possibilities of the film in public administration and social education.

It is curious that the so nationally conscious Scotland should only now be demonstrating its interest. In the past, few films have been made of the North, and all, or nearly all of them, by Englishmen. The Empire Marketing Board made four films on the Scottish fisheries, and one of sheep farming on the borders. The G.P.O. has touched Scotland in its *Night Mail* and *Copper Web*. The Travel Association did Edinburgh in *Key to Scotland*. Two or three years ago there was a film made locally in the Shetlands and some scenic material was gathered in the West Highlands for *Macbrayne*. Now and again an itinerant unit from America has sentimentalised the hills and the glens, the Highland games and the bagpipes.

What a poor picture of Scotland all this represents. Nothing of the heart of the country—of its contribution to science, industry and the life of the century. No sight of the Clyde traffic and shipbuilding, of the farming Lothians and the fruit farming valley of the Tay. Nothing of what Scotland has done to colonise the Empire or of the

"Highlands of Scotland"—March of Time

"Key to Scotland"

qualities of persistence which have made Scotland not uncelebrated among the smaller nations.

Mr. Percy Straus, Chairman of the Committee of Architecture and Physical Planning for the New York's World's Fair in 1939, has described the idea on which the World's Fair will be built, and this is what he says: "Below the superficially pleasing sensory impression, the World's Fair intends to demonstrate what the professions and industries of the world have so far accomplished towards the improvement in existence of the human being. To this end the world's professions and industries who are attacking the social problems of food, housing, clothing, health, transportation, and distribution, are afforded opportunity to show, group by group, what each has done and are challenged to make that show so plain that none may mistake the significance of their accomplishment. It is not too much to expect that out of such grouping of unrelated activities will come a better concept of the point at which their responsibilities interlock, their principles coincide. Nor is it beyond the realm of possibility that from a broad demonstration of the best tools for living of 1939 may take form a reliable forecast of the improved tools of the future. In fact, the theme of the Fair is 'Building the World of Tomorrow.' The directors of the project believe that an international exposition cannot to-day justify itself unless it sets its face with a maximum determination toward the future."

There has been a great deal of talk about the Empire Exhibition in Scotland next year, but at no time has the idea of it been so clearly and strongly articulated. And it is some such idea that is obviously wanted in connection with this plan for making Scottish films. They also should dove-tail in a considered scheme for showing the country's determination towards the future; and this would be enough to give dramatic perspective to every industry and every national interest which may wish to have its pictures shown. As Bernard Shaw has pointed out somewhere, there are simple measuring rules of purpose which make great projects simple.

But there is another thing to remember too. There is a factor in a country which is not of to-day, nor to-morrow, nor even of yesterday, and it lies in the continuing identity and spirit of the people. It will be a poor picture of Scotland if it remembers all the hospitals and housing estates, and forgets the language of a Rangers-Celtic football match.

"Key to Scotland"

FILM GUIDE

Shorts

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Slatinay and George Pal.

ANNITSFORD: Coronation	Jan. 20, 3 days
BIRMINGHAM: Rialto, Hall Green	Jan. 3, 6 days
BIRKENHEAD: Plaza	Jan. 3, 6 days
BEDMINSTER: Ambassadors	Jan. 22, 1 day
BLACKHALL ROCKS: Super	Jan. 27, 3 days
CATRINE: Wilson Hall	Jan. 10, 1 day
DUNDEE: Princess	Jan. 3, 3 days
DUDLEY: Grand	Jan. 20, 3 days
EAST KILBRIDE: Picture House	Jan. 13, 1 day
FARNWORTH: Empire	Jan. 10, 3 days
HAYDOCK: Picturedrome	Jan. 7, 2 days
KIRKHAM: Empire	Jan. 13, 3 days
LESMAHAGOW: Ritz	Jan. 14, 2 days
LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall	Jan. 20, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Capitol	Jan. 24, 6 days
LEEDS: Parkfield	Jan. 27, 3 days
WEYMOUTH: Odeon	Jan. 24, 3 days

Colourful Cairo (Travelogue).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.

BIRTLEY: Apollo	Jan. 26, 4 days
CATRINE: Wilson Hall	Jan. 10, 1 day
CHEADLE: Royal	Jan. 11, 1 day
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur	Jan. 20, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Princes	Jan. 3, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Agar Street, Strand	Jan. 31, 4 days
Embassy, Notting Hall Gate	Jan. 13, 3 days
SALCOMBE: Cinema	Jan. 13, 3 days
WREXHAM: Odeon	Jan. 24, 6 days

Cover to Cover (Documentary of book production).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films.
DIRECTION: Alexander Shaw.

ANNITSFORD: Coronation	Jan. 20, 4 days

90%

Maybe it's just luck when a studio records 90% of all the documentary films made in this country in one month.

But when that same studio goes on recording 90% all the time, it isn't just luck, it's darn good recording.

And as 90% of the documentary producers go to the studios that record 90% of the films, you can now see why 90% of the producers go to Imperial.

20 out of the 27 films shown on these pages were recorded by

Imperial Sound Studios
84 WARDOUR STREET . GER 1963

ABERDEEN: News Theatre	Jan. 31, 6 days
BIRTLEY: Apollo	Jan. 26, 4 days
BOLTON: Palace	Jan. 20, 3 days
BOWNESS: Royalty	Jan. 10, 3 days
BEACONSFIELD: Picture House	Jan. 6, 3 days
CATRINE: Wilson Hall	Jan. 10, 1 day
DUDLEY: Grand	Jan. 20, 4 days
DUBLIN: Princess	Jan. 23, 4 days
Rialto	Jan. 9, 4 days
DOLGELLY: Cosy	Jan. 24, 3 days
DUNMANAY: Broadway	Jan. 16, 2 days
EAST KILBRIDE: Picture House	Jan. 13, 1 day
HOLSWORTHY: Cinema	Jan. 3, 3 days
KINGS LYNN: Majestic	Jan. 31, 3 days
LEVEN: Troxy	Jan. 6, 3 days
LESMAHAGOW: Ritz	Jan. 14, 2 days
LLANGEFNI: Arcadia	Jan. 20, 3 days
ORRELL: Majestic	Jan. 13, 3 days
PENYGROES: Plaza	Jan. 5, 2 days
SCHOLES: Labour Hall	Jan. 13, 3 days
SEATON BURN: Queens	Jan. 20, 4 days
TOWYN: Cinema	Jan. 10, 3 days
WOOLTON: Picture House	Jan. 20, 3 days

Heads and Tails (Film of greyhound racing).
DISTRIBUTION: Denning

GRIMSBY: Savoy	Jan. 17, 6 days
KETTERING: Electric Palace	Jan. 10, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Rivoli	Jan. 27, 3 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street	Jan. 13, 4 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Princes	Jan. 17, 6 days
REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace	Jan. 17, 3 days

Heart of an Empire (Historical significance of St. James's Park and the surrounding buildings and memorials).
DISTRIBUTION: M.G.M.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films.
DIRECTION: Marion Grierson

MARKET HARBOROUGH: Oriental Cinema	Jan. 3, 3 days
PRESTON: Carlton Cinema	Jan. 3, 6 days

Forbidden Frontier (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION: World Window Productions
SUPERVISION: Sir Philip Gibbs

BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne	Jan. 24, 3 days
EAST GRINSTEAD: Radio Centre	Jan. 20, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House	Jan. 20, 3 days
SCARBOROUGH: Londesborough	Jan. 16, 1 day
WORTHING: Rivoli	Jan. 3, 7 days

Hollywood To-day (Behind the scenes in Film City).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION: Rupert Grayson

GLASGOW: Muirend, Toledo	Jan. 3, 3 days
Battlefield, Mayfair	Jan. 3, 3 days
ILKLEY: Picture House	Jan. 24, 6 days
RADCLIFFE: Odeon	Jan. 6, 3 days
WHALLEY RANGE: Odeon	Jan. 13, 3 days

Islands of the Bounty (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.

ANNAN: Bank	Jan. 24, 2 days
ABERDEEN: News Theatre	Jan. 10, 6 days
BEDMINSTER: Ambassadors	Jan. 8, 1 day
DUBLIN: Phibsboro Cinema	Jan. 27, 3 days
Mary Street Cinema	Jan. 20, 3 days
GATESHEAD: Askew	Jan. 27, 3 days
HORDEN: Picture House	Jan. 27, 3 days
HENDON: Classic	Jan. 6, 3 days
KNUTSFORD: Marcliff	Jan. 20, 3 days
KIRKHAM: Empire	Jan. 13, 3 days
LONGRIDGE: Palace	Jan. 27, 3 days
LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall	Jan. 20, 3 days
NEATH: Gnoll Hall	Jan. 3, 3 days
NORTON: Cinema	Jan. 6, 3 days
NEWTON GRANGE: Picture Palace	Jan. 27, 3 days
OLDHAM: Electraceum	Jan. 6, 3 days
RHYL: Odeon	Jan. 10, 6 days
STOCKPORT: Kings	Jan. 17, 2 days
WHITBURN: Miners Welfare Hall	Jan. 7, 2 days

Kew Gardens (A Horticultural Documentary)
PRODUCTION: Harold Lowenstein for Short Film Productions
DIRECTION: Philip Leacock
PHOTOGRAPHY: Vivian Braun

LONDON: Tatler	Jan. 31, 7 days

Men Against the Sea (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
DIRECTION: Vernon Sewell

DEVONPORT: Tivoli	Jan. 13, 3 days
INVERKEITHING: Majestic	Jan. 24, 3 days
LEEDS: Holbeck, Queens	Jan. 31, 3 days

Netherlands Old and New (Travelogue of Holland and the Island of Curacao).
PRODUCTION: Cedric Mallabey
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph

BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne	Jan. 17, 3 days
BIRKENHEAD: Super	Jan. 27, 3 days
CIRENCESTER: Picture House	Jan. 20, 3 days
CHESTER: Gaumont Palace	Jan. 3, 6 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur	Jan. 10, 3 days
EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace	Jan. 17, 6 days
GAINSBOROUGH: Grand	Jan. 27, 3 days
HAMILTON: La Scala	Jan. 13, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Corona	Jan. 6, 3 days
Gaumont, Princes Park	Jan. 24, 3 days
Plaza	Jan. 3, 3 days
Rivoli, Aigburth	Jan. 24, 3 days
LYDNEY: Picture House	Jan. 3, 3 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House	Jan. 24, 3 days
MOTHERWELL: Pavilion	Jan. 27, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Plaza	Jan. 10, 6 days
WEYMOUTH: Regent	Jan. 31, 6 days

Night Mail (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Basil Wright, Harry Watt

BLACKHALL ROCKS: Super	Jan. 27, 3 days
EASINGTON: Rialto	Jan. 27, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Alhambra, Golcar	Jan. 6, 3 days
NEW MILLS: Art Cinema	Jan. 17, 4 days
SCHOLES: Stoll Picture House	Jan. 27, 3 days

Nomad in the North (Scenic film of Norway).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION & DIRECTION: C. E. Hodges

COVENTRY: Gaumont Palace	Jan. 9, 1 day
FALKIRK: Pavilion	Jan. 6, 3 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street	Jan. 13, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House	Jan. 13, 3 days

People in the Parks.
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films
DIRECTION: Paul Burnford, Donald Alexander

BRADFORD: Picturedrome	Jan. 27, 3 days
HANDSWORTH: Grand	Jan. 31, 3 days
HAWORTH: Bronte	Jan. 17, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Marcliff, Hazel Grove	Jan. 20, 3 days
MARKET HARBOROUGH: Oriental	Jan. 13, 3 days
PITLOCHRY: Picture House	Jan. 3, 3 days
ROTHERHAM: Tivoli	Jan. 6, 3 days
SILKSWORTH: Hippodrome	Jan. 31, 3 days

Plane Sailing (The ins and outs of gliding).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
DIRECTION: Bosworth Goldman

ANDOVER: Odeon	Jan. 13, 3 days
BANGOR: Plaza	Jan. 10, 3 days
BRIDLINGTON: Lounge	Jan. 3, 3 days
BURY: Odeon	Jan. 3, 3 days
LEEDS: Capitol, Meanwood	Jan. 13, 3 days
Carlton	Jan. 13, 3 days
Hyde Park Picture House	Jan. 27, 3 days
Queens, Holbeck	Jan. 3, 3 days
LONDON: Monseigneur, Leicester Square, W.1	Jan. 17, 3 days

Rooftops of London (Documentary).
DISTRIBUTION: M.G.M.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films
DIRECTION: Paul Rotha

BARTON-ON-HUMBER: Oxford Pic. Hse	Jan. 6, 3 days
COGGESHALL: Kinema	Jan. 10, 3 days
DENNISTOUR: Park Cinema	Jan. 6, 3 days
STOURBRIDGE: Scala Theatre	Jan. 3, 3 days

Secrets of the Stars (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION: Argyle British Productions Ltd.

BURY: Odeon	Jan. 17, 6 days
CIRENCESTER: Picture House	Jan. 6, 3 days
GOOLE: Tower	Jan. 17, 3 days

Shorts (*Contd.*)

GLASGOW: Capitol, Ibrox Jan. 31, 6 days
New Parade, Dennistoun Jan. 31, 6 days
Tivoli, Partick Jan. 31, 6 days
HULL: Carlton Jan. 20, 3 days
National Jan. 13, 3 days
Playhouse Jan. 24, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton Jan. 6, 3 days
Lyceum Jan. 6, 3 days
ILKLEY: Picture House Jan. 10, 6 days
LONDON: Hippodrome, Cam Tn, N.W. Jan. 17, 7 days
LIVERPOOL: Rivoli, Aigburth Jan. 13, 3 days
LEEDS: Kingsway Jan. 3, 6 days
Hillcrest Jan. 24, 3 days
NORTHWICH: Pavilion Jan. 17, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House Jan. 3, 3 days
PORTSMOUTH: Theatre Royal Jan. 23, 7 days
PRESTON: New Victoria Jan. 31, 6 days
REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace Jan. 10, 6 days
SOWERBY BRIDGE: Electric Jan. 20, 3 days
STOKE-ON-TRENT: Hippodrome Jan. 6, 3 days
WORTHING: Rivoli Jan. 10, 6 days
WEDNESBURY: Picture House Jan. 6, 3 days
WISHAW: Cinema Jan. 3, 3 days

Snow Water (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
DIRECTION: H. Dreyer
ANDOVER: Odeon Jan. 3, 3 days
HAMILTON: Regal Jan. 6, 3 days
MANSFIELD: Empire Jan. 24, 6 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal Jan. 13, 3 days
SCARBOROUGH: Londesboro Jan. 30, 1 day

Southward Ho! (A journey across Franz-Josef glacier).
PRODUCTION: C. E. Hodges
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne Jan. 31, 6 days
CINDERFORD: Palace Jan. 27, 3 days
CHESTER: Music Hall Jan. 20, 3 days
EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace Jan. 10, 6 days
GUERNSEY: Lyric Jan. 31, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Corona Jan. 31, 6 days
Casino Jan. 10, 3 days
Empress Jan. 3, 6 days
Gaumont, Princes Park Jan. 27, 3 days
Plaza Jan. 20, 3 days
Tatler Jan. 20, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Princes Jan. 3, 6 days

Spring Comes to Town (About Hyde Park).
DISTRIBUTION: Denning
DIRECTION: M. L. Nathan
LEEDS: Tatler Jan. 24, 6 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street Jan. 3, 3 days

Statue Parade (Historical treatment of London Statues).
DISTRIBUTION: M.G.M.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films
DIRECTION: Paul Burnford and Ralph Keene
BIRMINGHAM: Ashted Row P.P. Jan. 6, 3 days
PRESCOT: Lyme House Cinema Jan. 3, 3 days
ST. AUSTELL: Capitol Jan. 3, 3 days

Strange Adventures (About Africa).
DISTRIBUTION: Denning
ALLOA: La Scala Jan. 27, 3 days
BRIDLINGTON: Lounge Jan. 24, 3 days
HARBOURNE: Picture House Jan. 6, 3 days
LOWESTOFT: Odeon Jan. 24, 6 days
LONDON: Eros, Piccadilly Jan. 10, 3 days
World News, Praed Street Jan. 10, 3 days
TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Ritz Jan. 17, 6 days

Sunny Tessin (Survey of the Canton Tessin, Southern Switzerland).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
LIVERPOOL: Trocadero Jan. 24, 6 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Queens Jan. 31, 6 days

This Other Eden (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION: Pennine Films Ltd.
CHESTER: Tatler Jan. 17, 6 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur Jan. 13, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Victoria Stn. Jan. 6, 3 days
News Thea., Waterloo Stn. Jan. 14, 4 days
Sphere News Theatre, Tottenham Court Road Jan. 13, 4 days
MANCHESTER: Tatler Jan. 17, 6 days
MORECAMBE: Tower Jan. 2, 1 day

To-day We Live (The depressed areas of Wales).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films
DIRECTION: Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson
CARDIFF: Canton Jan. 3, 3 days
Gaiety Jan. 6, 3 days
Monico Jan. 24, 3 days
Ninian Jan. 17, 3 days
Plaza Jan. 27, 3 days
Regent Jan. 13, 3 days
Splott Jan. 10, 3 days
Tivoli Jan. 20, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Caley Jan. 9, 1 day
GLASGOW: Picture House Jan. 23, 1 day

Way to the Sea (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
DISTRIBUTION: A.B.F.D.
PRODUCTION: Strand Films
DIRECTION: J. B. Holmes
ACCRINGTON: Princes Jan. 3, 6 days
ASHBOURNE: Elite Jan. 13, 3 days
BIRMINGHAM: Rialto, Hall Green Jan. 3, 6 days
BRADFORD: Picturedrome Jan. 31, 3 days
COLLYHURST: Palace Jan. 31, 6 days
FAILSWORTH: Grand Jan. 24, 6 days
HOLLINWOOD: Scala Jan. 24, 6 days
PITLOCHRY: Picture House Jan. 13, 3 days
SOUTH QUEENSFERRY: Rio Jan. 17, 2 days
UTTOXETER: Elite Jan. 20, 3 days
WILMSLOW: Rex Jan. 31, 3 days

ALL DISNEY PROGRAMMES
at the Tatler Theatre
Charing Cross Road
Weeks commencing
January 3rd
January 10th
January 17th
Further details from The Manager.

Wheel and Woe (The evolution of the motor car).
DISTRIBUTION: Kinograph
PRODUCTION: Liberty
DIRECTION: W. G. Duncalf
ALLOA: La Scala Jan. 6, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Grand, Stockbridge Jan. 24, 3 days
FALKIRK: Pavilion Jan. 3, 3 days
GLASGOW: B.B. Cinerama Jan. 10, 6 days
Kelvin, Finnieston Jan. 17, 3 days
Picture House, Partick Jan. 20, 3 days
Star, Maryhill Jan. 31, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton Jan. 20, 3 days
Lyceum Jan. 20, 3 days
HULL: West Park Jan. 3, 3 days
KIRKCALDY: Rialto Jan. 3, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Rivoli, Aigburth Jan. 6, 3 days
LONDON: Eros News Theatre Jan. 6, 4 days
News Thea., Victoria Stn. Jan. 27, 3 days
LUTON: Empire Jan. 13, 3 days
MIDDLESBROUGH: Pavilion Jan. 6, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre Jan. 17, 6 days
NORTHWICH: Pavilion Jan. 27, 3 days
PLYMOUTH: Palladium Jan. 31, 6 days
Savoy Jan. 31, 6 days

Foreign Films

Amphitryon (French).
PRODUCTION: UFA
DIRECTION: Reinhold Schunzel
STARRING: Henry Garat
Armand-Bernard
Jeanne Boitel
LONDON: Curzon Jan. 1, indefinitely

Burgtheater (Austrian).
SCENARIO & DIRECTION: Willi Forst
STARRING: Werner Krauss
Olga Tschechowa
LONDON: Forum Jan. 16, 7 days

La Belle Equipe (French).
DIRECTION: Julien Duvivier
STARRING: Jean Gabin
Charles Vanel
Marcel Geniat
LONDON: Berkeley Following *Monica and Martin*

Un Carnet de Bal (Winner of the Mussolini cup—French).
DIRECTION: Julien Duvivier
STARRING: Françoise Rosay
Harry Baur
Pierre Blanchar
Fernandel
Raimu
Robert Lynen
LONDON: Studio One Jan. 1, indefinitely

Ernte (German).
DIRECTION: Geza von Bolvary
STARRING: Paula Wessely
LONDON: Forum Jan. 9, 7 days

La Grande Illusion (French).
PRODUCTION: Realisation d'Art Cinematographique
DIRECTION: Jean Renoir
STARRING: Erich von Stroheim
Jean Gabin
Dita Parlo
LONDON: Academy Following *Squadrone Bianco*

La Kermesse Héroïque (French).
DIRECTION: Jaques Feyder
STARRING: Françoise Rosay
Jean Murat
LONDON: Forum Jan. 30, 7 days

Monica and Martin (Versprich Mir Nichts—German).
DIRECTION: Wolfgang Liebeneiner
STARRING: Luise Ullrich
Victor de Kowa
Heinrich George
LONDON: Berkeley Jan. 1, indefinitely

Nina Petrovna (French).
PRODUCTION: Solar, Paris
DIRECTION: Victor Tourjansky
STARRING: Isa Miranda
Fernand Gravet
LONDON: Curzon Following *Amphitryon*

So Ended a Great Love (Austrian).
DISTRIBUTION: Denning
DIRECTION: Karl Hartl
STARRING: Paula Wessely
Willi Forst
HEDNESFORD: Tivoli Jan. 23, 1 day
WANSTEAD: Kinema Jan. 3, 3 days

Squadrone Bianco (Italian).
PRODUCTION: Roma Films
DIRECTION: Augusto Genina
STARRING: Fosco Gianchetti
Anthony Centa
Fulvia Lanzi
LONDON: Academy Jan. 1, indefinitely

We from Krondstadt (Russian).
PRODUCTION: Lenfilm
DISTRIBUTION: Film Society
DIRECTION: Vinievski
LONDON: Forum Jan. 23, 7 days

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WHY REVERSAL FILM

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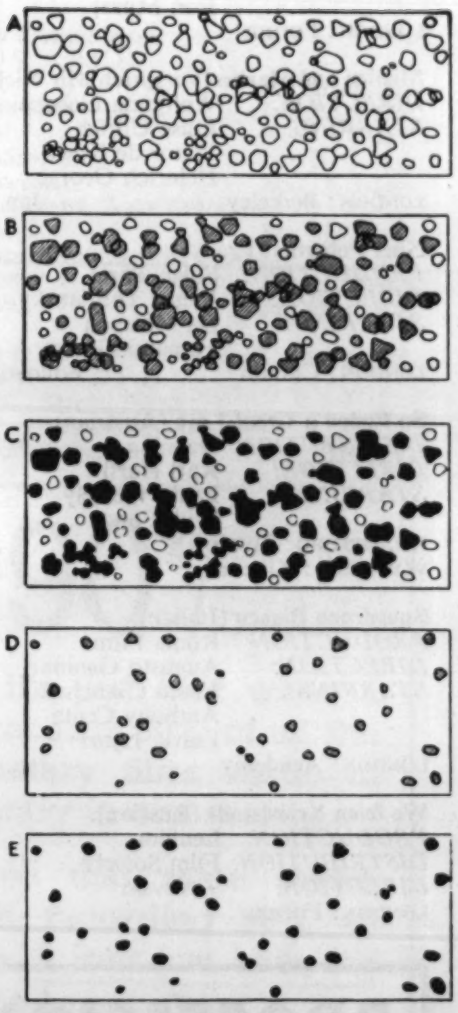

A. *Diagram showing the unexposed grains of silver bromide in the film.*

B. *The largest and most sensitive grains are exposed in the camera.*

C. *The exposed grains are developed to form a negative image.*

D. *The developed grains are removed by a bleaching bath which dissolves silver, leaving the undeveloped grains, which are now exposed.*

E. *These grains are now developed, forming a positive image.*

One big advantage of reversal film is absence of graininess in the positive image. The extreme fineness of grain is a direct result of the *reversal process.*

The following description of the reversal process is given in "Photography" by Dr. C. E. K. Mees, Director of Kodak Research.

"In the *reversal process,* the exposed image is developed, and then the developed silver is dissolved in a *bleaching* bath, which oxidises the silver. This leaves behind the undeveloped silver bromide, which was not affected by the developer because it was not exposed to light. After a fresh exposure to light, this remaining silver bromide is developed in its turn and gives a positive. This is illustrated in the figure, which is a drawing made from pictures taken through the microscope. In Section A, we see the grains of the light-sensitive silver bromide in the emulsion, and in Section B there are marked, by cross-hatching, those which have been affected by light during exposure in the camera. They would not show any change to the eye, of course, because the change by light is not visible. These grains form the latent image. After development, these exposed grains turn into black metallic silver, and this is shown in Section C of the diagram. Then the bleaching bath removes all the silver and leaves behind the silver bromide grains which were not exposed, as shown in Section D. These are re-exposed and developed and make the final positive, as we see in Section E."

. . . .

"The graininess of ordinary negatives is due to the large clumps of silver bromide grains present in the emulsion. These large clumps are more sensitive to light than small clumps or widely separated grains, and, therefore, when a short exposure is given, the large clumps are the first to become exposed. These are removed in the reversal process, and the final image is made up of the grains of the least sensitivity. Since these are the smallest grains and the smallest clumps of grains, *such a direct positive image shows very little graininess.*"

For full particulars of Ciné-Kodak Films and Kodak service, write to Mr. G. Taylor, Dept. 57,

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FILM SOCIETIES WHAT NOW?

Norman Wilson's challenging criticism of the Film Societies Movement

ARE the film societies losing their vitality? In some districts membership is falling, in others soaring. Both tendencies might be attributed to a change in the quality of the feature films available for exhibition. Continental production is undeniably more popular and less dynamic than it was some years ago. It would seem that this change suits the taste of some societies but offends others more critical.

For eight or nine years (London longer) the film societies were in the vanguard of film progress—creating a new, discriminating audience, paving the way for the repertory cinemas, supporting (at least morally) the work of experimental producers. Are we growing complacent, content to satisfy only that section of our membership which applauds the popular successes of the Academy or Studio One?

What else is there to show the selection committee may ask? Even the London Society, progenitor of all exhibiting groups, finds it sufficiently difficult to get suitable films that it has cut down the number of its performances. And even these that are obtained by the London Society are not always available to provincial groups, owing to the crazy conditions of distribution which seem to have penetrated from the film trade to the film society movement.

Even so, has the movement been fostered to give its acclaim to such films as *Savoy Hotel* 217, *Bonne Chance* or *Ernte* to the exclusion of *Zéro de Conduite*, *L'Atalante*, *We from Kronstadt* or even *Turn of the Tide*?

As Chairman of a Society which is one of the oldest in the country, I know from sad experience the difficulties of booking. I am only too conscious that owing to the absurd reluctance of some renters to release foreign films to provincial societies, though they know perfectly well a public showing outside London is impossible, my own Society has had to show certain films whose exhibition has been difficult to justify. More fortunately, I know less of the doubts which assail the officials of some societies who say "we dare not show that film; all our members would not like it and we might get resignations."

Rather resignation than stagnation. If film societies are not going to be courageous, experimental, progressive, they will not fulfil their function. When doubts assail us about a film, let us consider why we earn remission of entertainments tax.

Again, are we making the most of the material which is available? Have we given sufficient consideration to the possibility of comparison (*e.g. Pett & Pott:* Laurel & Hardy) in programme composition? Have we ever attempted to show to our sophisticated audiences an honest-to-goodness Western? Have we tried to illustrate the difference in dance treatment: Astaire, Berkeley, *Song of Ceylon*, peasants, natives? Have we ever deliberately compared documentary styles? Have we, in short, ever tried to create constructive programmes?

The film society in the industrial district of Billingham strangely, and perhaps commendably, records a drop of 15 per cent in its attendances, observing that this is probably a reflection of the steadily improving quality of ordinary commercial films and the lack of any noticeable advance in the continental films which have been shown. As a general statement this is no doubt true, and it points the problem common to most societies. The average run of continental films is just not good enough. For this the film societies can accept no blame.

WE can only support what is produced: we cannot create it. The American movie, though we may pretend to deride it, has for the present the more imaginative vitality. Its achievements, however, are sufficiently appreciated to need none of our assistance. British studio production is beyond our own help. But what of the realists? There can be no doubt that their achievement is the one distinctive contribution of Britain to the development of cinema. Some day it will be assessed at its real value. Meantime what are we doing to encourage and consolidate the work of our documentary producers?

True, we include many of their films in our programmes but are we not inclined, in true British fashion, to take them for granted? Should we not, in justice to ourselves, play them up, give them—with a deal more sense—something of the reverence which was once lavished on the French *avant-gardistes* and the Russian *regisseurs*?

An inherent snobbery makes us present often little-merited bouquets to continental producers while we neglect to cultivate our own creative genius. When *The Edge of the World* was released did any film society throw a reception for Michael Powell? Have not Grierson, Wright, Rotha, done more for the movement than the film societies have ever done for them? Did we play up Robert Stevenson and *Tudor Rose* when *Mary of Scotland* was ballyhooed throughout the country? Did we do anything for *Turn of the Tide* when British studios were vitiating their energies on international vapidities?

This next year may be a crucial one for the film society movement. Tyneside (rightly considered one of the most progressive groups), Glasgow and Edinburgh report increasing membership. Manchester is fighting a gallant battle and newer societies such as Belfast and Stirling are astride the first wave of enthusiasm. Aberdeen, Birmingham, Ayr and other societies are on a fairly even keel. Leicester and Dundee, on the other hand, are gravely concerned for the future, and London is singularly reticent about its membership.

The first stage of our work has been done. We must take council with ourselves about the policy of the future. Our task is not finished. We have created a vast new audience: now we must guide it. Imagination is called for. Courage is necessary. And a new vitality.

Notice of the Amateur Services Club Competition will be given in the February *W.F.N.* Owing to the rush at Christmas it was impossible to include anything in this issue.

FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

THE GUILD OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS: Hon. Secretary, Terence Grant, Esq., The Catholic Institute, Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow.

The production unit is fortunate in having obtained the use of a new studio where they will have more complete facilities for their work. The next production will probably be a documentary showing the development of Carfin Grotto.

The Society's films, *Corpus Christi*, *The Assumption* and *Pilgrims at Carfin* (1937) were shown in the Lourdes Institute at Carfin on Monday, November 29th, to a large audience. Arrangements are now being made for shows in Coatbridge, Dumbarton and Greenock.

THE OXFORD FILM SOCIETY: Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

Five meetings have been held at which the feature films were *We from Kronstadt*, *Vampyre*, *The Golem*, *Turksib*, *Marie Gallante* and *Zéro de Conduite*.

The most successful was undoubtedly Duvivier's *Golem* with Harry Baur.

It is hoped to select feature films for the next five meetings from *Birth of a Nation*, *Maria Bashkirtseff*, *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*, *The New Gulliver*, *The Dawn*, *Dood Water*, etc.

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY: Hon Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

For January 23rd the feature will be either *The Dawn* or *Music im Blut*. *La Kermesse Héroïque* is booked for February 20th.

Mr. Ivor Montagu will address a joint members' meeting of this Society and the Manchester and District Film Institute Society at a meeting arranged in January, and a half yearly members' meeting will be held early in February. It is hoped to show *The New Gulliver* either on March 20th or on April 19th.

FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW: Hon.Secretary, D. Paterson Walker, Esq., 129 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

Films shown on December 5th were *The Story of a Weather Disturbance* (G.B. Instructional), *The Saving of Bill Blewitt* (Harry Watt—G.P.O.), *Papageno* (Lotte Reiniger), *Heredity in Man* (G.B. Instructional), and *Les Loups Entre Nous* (shown at the Curzon as *The Sequel to the Second Bureau*).

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY: Hon. Secretary, 5–6 Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool, 1.

Programme on December 7th included *Children at School* (Realist Film Unit), *Rooftops of London* (Strand Films), Len Lye's *N. or N.W.*, George Pal's *Philips' Broadcast of* 1938, and *The Man Who Knew Too Little*. Big picture was *The Golem*, directed by Julien Duvivier.

WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY: Hon. Membership Secretary, Miss D. Roston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street. Hon. Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., 58 Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton.

At the meeting on December 15th the Programme was headed by *Merlusse* and *Riders to the Sea*, with *The Great Train Robbery* and *How to be a Detective* (Benchley) as supporting films.

THE LONDON SCHOOLS' FILM SOCIETY: Hon. Secretary, F. E. Farley, Esq., 50 Ashridge Crescent, Shrewsbury Park, S.E.18.

The London Schools' Film Society announces its first evening film school for the Spring of 1938. The arrangements provide an introductory course of sub-standard cinematography in relation to education. The subjects of the course include principles and practice of sub-standard projection, the arrangement of film lessons, the cinema in relation to extra curriculum activities of the school, the making of simple classroom films, and the cinema and cultural training. The classes are held at the Institute of Education, Southampton Row, W.C. at 6.30 p.m. on alternate Friday evenings commencing January 14th, 1938. All enquiries must be addressed to the Secretary.

The secretaries of the branch organisations which have already been established are:—Battersea and Wandsworth, Mr. K. D. Hacker, 18 Morella Road, S.W.12 ; Woolwich and Greenwich, Mr. H. Gibbons, 164 Shooters Hill Road, S.E.3 ; West London, Mr. H. Pomeroy, 25 Fairdale Gardens, Hayes, Middlesex.

SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY: Hon. General Secretary, J. S. Fairfax Jones, Esq., 10 Golden Square, W.1. Hon. Southampton Secretary, D. A. Yeoman, Esq., Ascupart House, Portswood Road, Southampton. Hon. Winchester Secretary, Miss R. Keyser, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester.

The Society gives six afternoon performances each season at the Regal, Southampton. There is a branch at Winchester for the recruitment of members. Among the films on the selection list for the present season are: *We From Kronstadt*, *La Kermesse Héroïque*, *The Court Waltzes*, *Ernte*, *Der Herrscher*, *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*, *The New Gulliver*, *Spanish Earth* and *Der Ammenkoenig*.

THE CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY: Hon. Secretaries, Miss C. W. Harley and Mr. J. S. Fairfax Jones. Headquarters at The Everyman Cinema Theatre, Hampstead.

Now in its fourth season, the Society gives programmes of selected films at special performances on Saturday mornings. Among those who have spoken at performances are Mary Field, Paul Rotha, Basil Wright and Evelyn Spice.

THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM EXCHANGE: Vivian Braun, Esq., 27 Ridgeway, Wimbledon, London, S.W.19.

The latest of a series of experiments carried out by the above, which exists for the study and advancement of film art, has shown once more that the foundation of the film is *cutting*. Harold Lowenstein, Joan Murray and Vivian Braun recently carried out an experiment in analysed cutting and used as material the simple action of a person rising from a lying position on the ground. And this is cinema experimentation in its simplest form. Many other much more original and complex works are being carried out.

During the last few months the E.F.E. have been able to actually help many amateurs in the production of films, from personal ones to purely experimental essays.

WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY: Hon. Secretary, L. G. Watson, Esq., 10 Meadway, Buckhurst Hill.

The Society desires to take this opportunity of wishing the Proprietors and Management of *World Film News*, and all readers, a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

A series of addresses on the various aspects of film-making is being given by members at technical meetings during the winter months. The talks so far have been on the subjects of "Camera," "Emulsions," "Filters," "Camera Work" and "Lighting."

Whilst membership must necessarily be limited, there are one or two vacancies in the Society. Applications, for full or associate membership, should be addressed to the Secretary, as above.

METEOR FILM PRODUCING SOCIETY: Interim Secretary: Ian S. Ross, Esq., 80 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, C.1. Studio: 234 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

Production of the film for the Scottish Churches' Film Guild has been proceeding steadily and satisfactorily since the beginning of September. *Minister's Monday*, as the film is called, is a straightforward record of typical happenings in the life of a Scottish country minister. The scenario is by Angus MacVicar, the well-known novelist, and the film, which is now nearly completed, runs to 800 ft. 16 mm.

WEST MIDDLESEX AMATEUR CINE CLUB: Hon. Secretary, E. H. Whittleton, Esq., 39 Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

Production has now started on the new film, provisionally titled *Climax*. The first set has been built, and the scenes shot. This set represented the Chief partner's office in a stockbroker's office. Great assistance was gained from the recent articles on set construction published in *World Film News*. Another set to be built later is a village "pub." Here again the above-mentioned articles will prove a useful source of ideas.

ACE MOVIES: Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio: 90 High Street Mews, S.W.19.

Preparations are under way for the shooting of the big banqueting scenes in the current production. The players are masked and in fancy dress. Volunteers are urgently required to make up the required number of revellers (ladies especially). There is no charge, but players will be required to supply their own fancy dresses.

FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE: Hon. Secretary, H. S. Cuthbertson, Esq., 3 Somerset Terrace, Euston, W.C.1.

Since the last published report the League has released several films, the chief of which is a two-reel story-comedy, *Red, Right and Bloo*, acted by the students at the Left Book Club Summer School. This is to be exhibited at the Royal Photographic Society during November. The League is also completing a two-reel Kodachrome-colour film on the struggle in Spain. This will be cut to the sound of Jack Lindsay's mass recital *On Guard for Spain*, as played at the Unity Theatre Club, with disc recording.

A Film School and Festival is to be held by the League from January 21st to 25th.

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